

VETERANS VOICE

VA Pension Recipients Need to Report Medical Expenses

Prior to December 2012, the Veterans Administration (VA) would send annually an Eligibility Verification Report (EVR), along with a Medical Expense Report (MER). **This process has now been changed.** If your only income is Social Security, the Veterans Administration will not send you an EVR and they are not sending MERs. This is because they are able to obtain your Social Security income directly from the IRS.

What you need to be aware of, is that you need to report your calendar year 2014 medical expenses on the Medical Expense Report form after January 1, 2015. Again, this form is not being sent to you. You need to contact my office or obtain the form from the internet (search for VA Form 21-8416).

I would caution you in completing the form yourself that many pensioners have not claimed the medical expenses that they were entitled to and have lost thousands of dollars of pension money due to incorrectly completed forms.

We are here to assist you in completing the form correctly and obtaining the maximum amount of VA pension to which you are entitled. The services we provide are FREE of charge.

Assistance to Needy Veterans Grant

The Assistance to Needy Veterans grant program provides limited financial assistance to those in need and who have exhausted all other sources of aid. You cannot have more than \$1,000 in combined cash assets. The grants may be used for specified health care and subsistence needs, up to the lifetime maximum of \$7,500 per individual, for the Assistance to Needy Veterans grant program.

Health Care Aid financial assistance may be provided to qualified, eligible applicants for the following items:

- Dental - \$500 for restorative care and \$3,750 for upper and lower dentures
- Vision - \$400 for exam, lenses and frames
- Hearing - \$200 for exams and \$3,750 for hearing aids

If you are enrolled in the VA Healthcare system, vision and hearing services are available through that program for free. The VA Healthcare system only covers dental services for 100% service-connected veterans. Approved applicants will receive a Description of Benefits (DOB) that will list approved care and the time period during which the care must be obtained. The DOB should be given to the health care provider you chose, who will return it to Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) with the billing information. Payments will be sent directly from WDVA to the health care provider.

WDVA may not provide health care aid under this program unless the recipient's health care provider agrees to accept, as full payment for the health care provided, the amount of the payment, the amount of the recipient's health insurance or other third-party payments, if any, and the amount that the department determines the applicant is capable of paying.

Traumatic Injury Insurance

The Department of Defense announced the implementation of traumatic injury protection insurance under the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) program. The following is a summary of Traumatic Injury Protection.

Traumatic Injury Protection insurance, known as TSGLI, is a Servicemembers Group Life Insurance program designed to provide financial assistance to service members during their recovery period from a serious traumatic injury.

Servicemembers eligible for SGLI are insured for traumatic injury protection of up to \$100,000, unless they decline SGLI coverage. A flat monthly premium of \$1.00 will be added to the monthly SGLI deduction, regardless of the amount of SGLI coverage that the service member has elected.

TSGLI is not disability compensation and has no effect on entitlement for compensation and pension benefits provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs or disability benefits provided by the Department of Defense. It is an insurance product similar to commercial dismemberment policies.

TSGLI vs. Disability Compensation

TSGLI provides money for a loss due to a specific traumatic event while disability compensation is intended to provide on-going financial support to make up for the loss of income-earning potential due to service-connected injuries.

TSGLI Provisions

TSGLI has a retroactive provision that provides any service member who suffers a qualifying loss between Oct. 7, 2001 and Dec. 1, 2005, a benefit under the TSGLI program if the loss was a direct result of injuries incurred in Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The Department of Defense developed this program in close coordination with the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness will closely monitor implementation with the services and make necessary adjustments if required.

eBenefits

What is eBenefits?

eBenefits is a joint VA/DoD web portal that provides resources and self-service capabilities to veterans, service members, and their families to research, access and manage their VA and military benefits and personal information. eBenefits uses secure credentials to allow access to personal information and gives users the ability to perform numerous self-service functions. It also provides a list of links to other sites that provide information about military and veteran benefits. It is an essential way for veterans, service members, and their families to receive access to and service from VA and DoD.

What can I do in eBenefits?

Some of the features within eBenefits allow veterans and service members to access official military personnel documents, view the status of their disability compensation claim, transfer entitlement of Post-9/11 GI Bill to eligible dependents (service members only), and register for and update direct deposit information for certain benefits.

How do I access eBenefits?

eBenefits is located at www.ebenefits.va.gov. Before veterans or service members can access and use eBenefits, they must be listed in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) and obtain a DS Logon. They can choose from two levels of registration, DS Logon Level 1 (Basic) and DS Logon Level 2 (Premium). Note: If veterans attempt to register and are informed they have no DEERS record, VA will first need to verify their military service and add them to DEERS. This is most likely to occur in the case of veterans who served prior to 1982.

What is a DS Logon?

A DS Logon is a secure identity (username and password) that is used by various DoD and VA websites, including eBenefits. If you are already registered in DEERS, you are eligible for a DS Logon. Once you have a DS Logon, it's valid for the rest of your life.

How do I register for an eBenefits account?

You can register for an eBenefits account online using the eBenefits DS Logon Account Registration Wizard. There are two types of registration, Basic and Premium. You will be walked through a series of questions to assist you in obtaining a Premium eBenefits Account, which gives you the highest level of access to eBenefits features. With a Premium Account you can view personal data about yourself in VA and DoD systems, apply for benefits online, check the status of your claims, update your address, and more. To get a Premium eBenefits Account, you must verify your identity.

Many people will be able to verify their identity online by answering a few security questions. Service members may verify their identity online by using their Common Access Card. Military retirees may verify their identity online using their Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) Logon. For those unable to verify their identity online, you will instantly receive a Basic Account. A Basic eBenefits Account lets you customize the site and access information you enter into eBenefits yourself; however, you cannot see your personal information in VA or DoD systems. There are other options available to you, veterans in receipt of VA benefits via direct deposit, may have their identity verified by calling 1-800-827-1000 and selecting option 7. My HealthVet users may use their secure My HealthVet identity to obtain an eBenefits account.

Green Bay Vet Center

The establishment of Vet Centers is to provide readjustment counseling services to Vietnam veterans who were experiencing problems adjusting from military life to civilian life after serving during war times. The Vet Centers were so successful at addressing the needs of combat veterans, the program was expanded to include veterans who served during WWII, Korean War and Post-Vietnam Conflicts. Services included sexual harassment/trauma in the military. There are over 235 Vet Centers throughout the United States. The Green Bay Vet Center offers all of these services for FREE. Please contact the Kewaunee County Veterans Service Office for more information.

To apply or obtain more information on the above benefits, contact Joe Aulik at the County Veterans Service Office at 388-7198 or e-mail at aulikj@kewauneecc.org to sign up for the veteran benefit e-mail list to keep up-to-date on federal and state benefits. Follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/KewauneeCVSO.

Mobile Vet Center

The Green Bay Mobile Vet Center will be in Kewaunee at the Human Service Building, 810 Lincoln Street, Kewaunee, WI on February 6, 2015 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. in conjunction with the monthly visit by Green Bay Vet Center counselor. Come out and see what the Mobile Vet Center is all about.

2015 Casco American Legion Post 319 Gunless Poultry Shoot
Casco American Legion Thibodeau-Drossart Post 319 is sponsoring the 2015 Gunless Poultry Shoot. Proceeds will go to the Casco American Veterans Activities Fund which includes American Legion Youth program, community programs, and Kewaunee County veterans who are in need. Come out and support the American Legion and your community. Raffle

tickets are \$1.00 each or 6 tickets for \$5.00. During each raffle there are three or four items that can be won. There are about 20 raffles each afternoon. In addition, there are two 50/50 raffles each afternoon.

- January 25, Sunday at Tippi Canoe, Euren 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.
 - February 8, Sunday at TJ's Pub and Grill, Casco, 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.
 - February 22, Sunday at Moxie's Supper Club, Casco, 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.
 - March 8, Sunday at Moe's Corner, Rio Creek, 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.
 - March 29, Sunday at Jim's Bar and Bowl, Casco, 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.
- Items to be raffled are: Frozen meats, baby back ribs, boneless turkey breasts, pork tenderloins, beef tenderloins, Marchant's side pork, ten-pound box of bacon, Green Bay Packer's jersey's, several hams, 50/50 raffle, and much more!!! If you have any questions call Chuck Zellner, Post 319 Commander, at 920-255-6767. Wisconsin Raffle License # B0028745B-12751.

Veterans Manor

Cardinal Capital management is building the Veterans Manor near the VA Green Bay Clinic. They are looking for veteran contractors or unemployed veterans with experience in construction. If you are interested contact Julie at jscardina@cardinalcapital.us

Veteran Choice Program

On August 7, 2014, President Obama signed into law the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-146) ("Choice Act"). Technical revisions to the Choice Act were made on September 26, 2014, when the President signed into law the Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-175). VA's goal continues to be to provide timely, high-quality healthcare for Veterans. Veterans and VA employees nationwide understand the need for reform, and VA is committed to putting these reforms into place. As this process continues to move forward, VA will work with other Departments, Congress, Veterans Service Organizations, and other stakeholders to ensure that provisions are implemented as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Many Veterans will now have the option to receive non-VA health care rather than waiting for a VA appointment or traveling to a VA facility. Beginning November 5, 2014, the new Choice Program will begin to cover non-VA care for eligible Veterans enrolled in VA healthcare. **Veterans are eligible if any of these situations apply to you:**

- You have been told by your local VA medical facility that you will need to wait more than 30 days from your preferred date or the date medically determined by your physician
- Your current residence is more than 40 miles from the closest VA health care facility
- You need to travel by plane or boat to the VA medical facility closest to your home
- You face a geographic challenge, such as extensive distances around water or other geologic formations, such as mountains, which presents a significant travel hardship

Every Veteran will receive a letter and a Choice Card in the mail with details about the program. **Veterans will be eligible for the program and receive cards in three phases:**

- Veterans who may live more than 40 miles from a VA facility.
- Veterans who are currently waiting for an appointment longer than 30 days from their preferred date or the date determined to be medically necessary by their physician.
- All remaining Veterans enrolled for VA healthcare who may be eligible for the Choice Program in the future.

To set up an appointment with a non-VA provider, call the VA at 866-606-8198 and we will work with you to ensure you are approved for care in your community. <http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/index.asp>

Jan 6	Kewaunee American Legion Post 29 (1st Tue) American Legion Auxiliary, Kewaunee Legion Hall	7:30 p.m.	388-2662
Jan 8	Kewaunee VFW Post 3392 (1st Thur) Kewaunee Legion Hall	7:30 p.m.	388-0217
Jan 12	Casco American Legion Post 319 (2nd Mon) Casco Village Hall	6:30 p.m.	255-3344
Jan 14	Robinson American Legion Post 538 (2nd Wed) Carlton Town Hall	8:00 p.m.	776-1136
Jan 15	Algoma American Legion Post 236 (3rd Thur) Algoma Legion Hall	7:00 p.m.	487-9929
Jan 19	Luxemburg American Legion Post 262 Annual Christmas Part and American Legion Auxiliary (3rd Mon) Luxemburg Community Center	7:00 p.m.	365-6155
Jan 20	Kewaunee County AMVETS Post 42 (3rd Tue) Algoma Legion Hall	6:30 p.m.	487-2248
Jan 25	Casco American Legion Post 319 Gunless Poultry Shoot, Tippi Canoe	1:00 p.m.	255-6767

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Paradise Estates LLC would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our Veterans and their spouses and to offer assistance in receiving your full benefits you deserve for any assisted living needs you or your spouse have earned.

Thank you,
Mike & Kathy Paral

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