



FOR WOMEN VETERANS

WOMEN VETERANS BENEFITS AND SERVICES

Women Veterans Health Program
South Texas Veterans Health Care System
210-949-9449

WOMEN VETERANS

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) understands the health care needs of women Veterans and is committed to meeting those needs. Women Veterans served and they deserve the best quality care.

The number of women Veterans is on the rise and the number of women Veterans using VA health care is growing in turn.

VA is taking steps to support the growing number of women Veterans: enhancing facilities, training health care staff and improving services to make sure women who are eligible for VA care can access services tailored to their needs.

VA's goals for women's health care are to:

- Ensure all women Veterans receive equitable, high-quality and comprehensive health care services in a sensitive and safe environment at all VA facilities.
- Be a national leader in the provision of health care for women Veterans, thereby raising the standard of care for all women.

You can expect:

- Women Veterans Program Managers (WVPMs) to assist you at every facility.
- Comprehensive primary care, mental health services, emergency and specialty care given by proficient and interested providers.
- Privacy, safety, dignity and sensitivity to gender-specific needs.
- State-of-the-art health care equipment and technology.
- Pharmacy services available by mail-order and online.

INTRODUCTION

QuickNote



This guide presents answers to 25 questions frequently asked by women Veterans. The services covered are not strictly gender-specific, so the information may prove helpful to male Veterans as well.

GENERAL
INFO

GENERAL INFORMATION

1 What services are available for women Veterans?

VA offers a range of benefits and services for Veterans – both men and women. As a Veteran, you may qualify for disability compensation, pension, education and training, health care, home loans, insurance, vocational rehabilitation and employment, and burial benefits. VA also offers supportive services for homelessness, mental health issues and readjustment.



VA offers gender-specific services for women Veterans, and conducts research initiatives to better understand the effects military service has on women's lives.

The Center for Women Veterans

The Center for Women Veterans monitors and coordinates VA's administration of programs, health care and benefits services for women Veterans. The Center also advocates for a cultural transformation in how the contributions of women Veterans are recognized, and raises awareness about the responsibility to treat women Veterans with dignity and respect.

For more information, visit: www.va.gov/womenvet

2 What is the Women Veterans Call Center?

Knowledgeable staff at the Women Veterans Call Center (WVCC) provide information about benefits, eligibility and services specifically for women Veterans. All the representatives at the WVCC are women, and many are Veterans themselves who can relate to women Veterans, their families and friends. The call is free, and you can call as often as you like.

WVCC links women Veterans to information and makes direct referrals to WVPMs located at every VA Medical Center.

Contact Info

855-VA-WOMEN (829-6636)

Hours

Monday-Friday: 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. ET

Saturday: 8 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. ET

WVCC Outreach

Besides answering calls, WVCC makes calls to women Veterans to let them know about the services and benefits they may be eligible to receive.

What will happen when I receive a call?

A trained WVCC staff member will identify herself as working for VA and ask if it is a good time to talk. She will then ask if you are aware of your eligibility for benefits.

- › You will be provided with information about VA benefits and health care services, and a package of information will be sent to your home.
- › Your contact information will be confirmed so staff may follow up.

WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE

Women Veterans Health Care ensures that timely, equitable, high-quality, comprehensive health care services are provided in a sensitive and safe environment at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health facilities. You can expect:

- › Comprehensive primary care by a proficient and interested primary care provider.
- › Privacy, safety, dignity and sensitivity to your needs.
- › The right care in the right place and at the right time.
- › State-of-the-art health care equipment and technology.
- › High-quality preventive and clinical care, equal to that provided to male Veterans.

QuickNote



At each VA Medical Center, a Women Veterans Program Manager (WVPM) is designated to assist women Veterans. She can help coordinate all the services you may need.

To find out about VA health care benefits, contact your local WVPM or visit: www.va.gov/healthbenefits

3 What health services are available?

- › Primary care
- › Women's health specialty care
- › Disease prevention and screening
- › Emergency care
- › Long-term care
- › Mental health care
- › Physical rehabilitation
- › Sexual trauma counseling
- › Substance abuse treatment

4 Am I eligible for VA health care benefits?

If you served in the active military service and were separated under any condition other than dishonorable, you may qualify for VA health care benefits.

Current and former members of the Reserves or National Guard who completed Federal active duty may also be eligible for VA health care benefits.



Find out more about eligibility at:

www.va.gov/healthbenefits/apply/veterans.asp

5 How do I enroll?

The simplest way to apply for VA health care benefits is to complete and submit VA Form 10-10EZ, Application for Health Benefits, online at: www.vets.gov/healthcare/apply

You can also apply:

- › **In person** at your local VA health care facility.
- › **By calling: 877-222-VETS (8387)**
- › A VA representative will help you complete the application. Within three to five business days, you will receive the completed form to review, sign and return.
- › **By mailing** a completed and signed application to:
Health Eligibility Center
2957 Clairmont Road, Suite 200
Atlanta, GA 30329-1647

6 What is the VHIC?

The Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC) is for identification and check-in at VA appointments. It cannot be used as a credit card or an insurance card, and it does not authorize or pay for care at non-VA facilities

To find out more about the VHIC and how to get yours, visit:

www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vhic

7 How do I get a first appointment at a VA health care facility?

You may request a doctor's appointment at the time you apply in person, or by checking "yes" to the question on the application asking if you want an appointment. An appointment will be made with a VA doctor or provider and you will be notified by mail of the appointment. The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) aims to schedule non-urgent appointments for new patients within 14 days.

If you need health care before your scheduled appointment, contact the Enrollment Coordinator, Urgent Care Clinic or the Emergency Room at your local VA health care facility.

Find a facility near you at: www.va.gov/directory

Keep track of your appointments and find tips and tools to help you manage your health at My HealthVet:
www.myhealth.va.gov

8 What if I have a complaint about my care?

Contact the WVPM or Patient Advocate at your nearest VA facility. During regular business hours, you can contact:

VHA Women's Health Services: 202-461-0373
VA Center for Women Veterans: 202-461-6193

9 Does VA provide gynecological care and maternity care?

Gynecological care and maternity care are available either at your VA facility or through referrals to appropriate providers in the community.

VA health care provides women Veterans with a full range of reproductive health services, including care for menstrual problems, Pap smears, birth control and breast care such as mammograms and breast cancer treatments.

VA covers pregnancy care through arrangements with community providers. VA will pay for prenatal care, delivery and postnatal care for eligible women Veterans, as well as care for a newborn in the first seven days after birth.



QuickNote



Contact a WVPM as early as possible to explore your care options.

If you have a permanent total disability resulting from a service-connected injury, and your child is not otherwise eligible for medical care under the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services (CHAMPUS), he or she could receive care under VA's Civilian Health and Medical Program (CHAMPVA), which is different from VA's routine seven-day newborn coverage.

To find out if your child qualifies for health care through Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), call **877-543-7669** or visit: www.insurekidsnow.gov/state

10 Can I be evaluated for nursing home care?

Under the Millennium Health Care Act of 1999, VA must provide or pay for nursing home care for Veterans who require it and who meet the following criteria:

- Have a service-connected disability rating of 70% or more
- Need nursing home care for a service-connected disability
- Are rated 60% service-connected and are either unemployable or have an official rating of "permanently and totally disabled"

First, make sure you are enrolled for VA health care benefits. Then, enroll in a primary care clinic and ask to be evaluated for nursing home care. The evaluation will be done by either the primary care provider or a geriatric team.

If you require nursing home care for any other reason, you must meet income and asset criteria to be eligible. Placement is made based on nursing home availability and you may be charged a co-payment for such services. Eligibility and admission criteria are unique to each nursing home.

Learn more at: www.va.gov/geriatrics



MENTAL HEALTH CARE & MST

Most Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Centers have inpatient mental health programs. Contact your VA primary care provider or the local VA Mental Health Program office for assistance. If you already have a therapist and need inpatient care, please discuss your concerns with your therapist.

11 What specialized services are available for Veterans who have experienced trauma?

Every VA health care facility has providers who are knowledgeable about treatment for the aftereffects of trauma. There are specialized trauma care programs offered in residential or inpatient settings for Veterans who need more intense treatment and support. Some of these programs serve women only or have women-only treatment cohorts.

Contact the Women Veterans Program Manager (WVPM) at your local VA health care facility for more information.



QuickNote

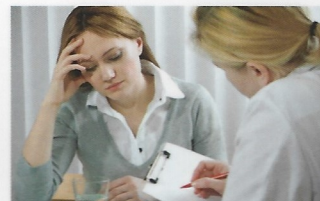


Vet Centers provide counseling for combat Veterans who are experiencing readjustment difficulties. For more information visit: www.vetcenter.va.gov and www.ptsd.va.gov

TRAUMA

12 How can I get help for sexual trauma?

Every VA facility provides free care for mental and physical health conditions related to military sexual trauma (MST). You may be eligible for MST-related care even if you are not eligible for other VA services.



All treatment for physical and mental health conditions related to experiences of MST is provided free of charge. Service connection or disability compensation is not required to receive free treatment for conditions related to MST.

Veterans who need more intense treatment and support may be offered specialized MST treatment in residential or inpatient settings. To accommodate Veterans who do not feel comfortable in mixed-gender treatment settings, some facilities have separate programs for men and women. All residential and inpatient MST programs have separate sleeping areas for men and women.

To receive care:

- › Ask your VA provider for a referral for MST services.
- › Contact the MST Coordinator at your local VA Medical Center.
- › Contact your local Vet Center.

To find out more about MST, visit: www.mentalhealth.va.gov/msthome.asp

If you are in crisis, contact the Veterans Crisis Line:

- › 800-273-TALK (8255), press 1
- › www.veteranscrisisline.net

MST

MENTAL
HEALTH
& MST

DISABILITY COMPENSATION

13 Can I receive disability compensation for my experience of MST?

You can apply for disability compensation for any current difficulties that are related to your service, including those related to personal assault or military sexual trauma (MST).

To apply, complete Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Form 21-526, Veteran's Application for Compensation and/or Pension, or go to: www.ebenefits.va.gov

14 Can I have my disability compensation claim reevaluated?

You may request a reevaluation of your claim anytime if you believe your condition has changed or worsened.

To submit a request, send a letter, statement or VA Form 21-4138, Statement in Support of Claim, to the VA regional office.

Include the following information with your request:

- › Name
- › VA claim number, Service number or Social Security number
- › Contact information
- › Current address
- › Statement explaining change requested
- › Any supporting new and pertinent medical evidence

Find your VA regional office:
www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/offices.asp

VA Form 21-4138 is available at:
www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-4138-ARE.pdf

You may also call to reopen your claim: 800-827-1000

COMPENSATION

EDUCATION BENEFITS

15 How do I obtain education benefits?

- › Apply online if you know which benefit you want to use.
- › Visit your nearest VA regional office to apply in person.
- › Consult with the VA Certifying Official at the school of your choice. He or she can help you apply.
- › Call **888-GIBILL-1 (442-4551)** to have the application mailed to you.

Montgomery GI Bill® (MGIB) assists enrolled active-duty members and Reservists with the pursuit of higher education degrees, certificates and other education and training.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill® offers higher education and training benefits to Veterans, Service members and their families who served after September 10, 2001.

For more information, call **888-GIBILL-1 (442-4551)** or visit: www.benefits.va.gov/gibill

Apply online at: www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/apply.asp

GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. Government website at: www.benefits.va.gov/gibill



EDUCATION

COMPENSATION & EDUCATION

LOANS & FINANCIAL HELP

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

Home Loans: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Home Loan Guaranty Program provides loan guaranties to Service members, Veterans, Reservists and un-remarried surviving spouses for the purchase of homes, condominiums and manufactured homes, and for refinancing loans. A VA loan guaranty can be used to:

- › Buy a home.
- › Buy a residential condominium.
- › Build a home.
- › Repair, alter or improve a home.
- › Refinance an existing loan.
- › Buy a manufactured home with or without a lot.

Learn more about the VA Home Loan Guaranty and the eligibility requirements for VA Home Loans at: www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans

Business Startup: The VA Office of Small & Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) enables Veterans to gain access to economic opportunity by leveraging the Federal procurement system and expanding participation of procurement-ready small businesses. For more information, visit: www.va.gov/osdbu

Car Loans: VA does not provide assistance for automobile purchases except for eligible Veterans and Service members who need special adaptive equipment.

To apply, contact a VA regional office at **800-827-1000** or your local VA Medical Center.

17 How can I access emergency bill-payment assistance?

Your state VA can best assist you. Find the number online at: www.va.gov/statedva.htm

Local Veterans' service organizations, churches and community organizations may also be able to assist.

EMPLOYMENT

18 How do I access employment options for women Veterans?

For job-search resources, refer to the following websites:

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

VA for Vets: www.vaforsvets.va.gov

VA Careers: www.vacareers.va.gov/veterans

My Career@VA: www.mycareeratva.va.gov

CareerScope: www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/careerscope.asp

U.S. Office of Personnel Management

Feds Hire Vets: www.fedshirevets.gov

U.S. Department of Labor

Veterans' Employment and Training Services:
www.dol.gov/vets

CareerOneStop:
www.careeronestop.org



HOMELESS SERVICES

19 Who can I contact if I am homeless or at risk of becoming homeless?

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has comprehensive programs to prevent and eliminate Veteran homelessness.

- › The HUD-VASH program – a partnership between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and VA Supportive Housing (VASH) program – provides permanent, supportive housing for the most vulnerable homeless Veterans and special services for homeless women Veterans.

VA offers health care programs for homeless Veterans, including:

- › Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans Program
- › Health Care for Homeless Veterans Program
- › Homeless Veterans Dental Program

For more information or to find your state's Homeless Veteran Coordinator, visit: www.va.gov/homeless



QuickNote



Call VA's 24/7 National Call Center for Homeless Veterans to reach trained VA responders who can connect you with the resources VA offers: **877-4AID-VET (424-3838)**

HOMELESS SERVICES

RESERVE COMPONENT

20 What benefits and services are there for National Guard and Reserve members?

As a member of the National Guard or Reserve, you may qualify for a wide range of VA benefits. The length of your service, service commitment and/or your duty status may determine your eligibility for specific benefits.

Find out more at: www.benefits.va.gov/guardreserve



OEF/OIF/OND VETERANS

21 What special benefits are available for OEF/OIF/OND Veterans?

Five Years Cost-Free Health Care: Returning Operations Enduring Freedom/Iraqi Freedom/New Dawn (OEF/OIF/OND) combat Veterans (including Reserve Component members called up to active duty) can receive cost-free medical care for any condition related to their service in the Iraq/Afghanistan theater for five years after the date of their discharge or release. This benefit covers all illnesses and injuries except those clearly unrelated to active military service.

Dental Benefit: OEF/OIF/OND combat Veterans may be eligible for one-time dental care – but you must apply with in 180 days of your separation date from active duty.

For more information, call **877-222-8387** or visit: www.oefoif.va.gov

RESERVE COMPONENT / OEF/OIF/OND

HOMELESS/
RESERVE COMPONENT

MILITARY RECORDS

22 How do I locate my military records or those of a relative?

To obtain copies of your military personnel records, submit a signed form SF 180, Request Pertaining to Military Records, to the records custodian of your branch of service (addresses are on page two of the form).

Contact:

National Personnel Records Center (Military Personnel Records)
1 Archives Drive, St. Louis, MO 63138-1002

Fax: 314-801-9195

www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel

Online requests:

www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records

RESEARCH

23 Where can I learn about women Veterans' health research?

Women are entering the military in record numbers. To support the health care needs associated with both current and future women Veterans, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) supports a comprehensive women's health research agenda to better understand women Veterans' health and health care needs and to improve delivery of care.

Learn more about VA women's health research at:

www.hsrd.research.va.gov/for_researchers/womens_health

24 How and where do I find historical information on women Veterans?

Contact the Women in Military Service for America (WIMSA) Memorial, which is located at the gates of Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, VA.

800-222-2294 | www.womensmemorial.org

25 Where can I find legislation on women Veterans?

You may access legislative information and follow up on Congressional bills at: www.congress.gov
Type "Women Veterans" in the search bar.

RESOURCES

Center for Women Veterans: www.va.gov/womenvet

Women Veterans Call Center: 855-VA-WOMEN (829-6636)

eBenefits: www.ebenefits.va.gov

Find your regional benefits office:
www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/offices.asp

Health benefits eligibility: www.va.gov/healthbenefits

Locate the nearest VA facility: www.va.gov/directory

Women Veterans Health Care: www.womenshealth.va.gov

Homeless Veterans: www.va.gov/homeless

National Call Center for Homeless Veterans:
877-4AID-VET (424-3838)

Veterans Crisis Line: 800-273-TALK (8255), press 1
Website: www.veteranscrisisline.net

RECORDS & RESEARCH

RESOURCES

RECORDS
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