

Veteran Benefits Q and A

Many American veterans are unaware of the fact that they might be eligible to receive benefits. Some veterans feel that they do not have any reason to receive benefits and others upon being discharged would rather leave that life behind. Plus, the laborious, seemingly endless application process can seem too daunting even to give it a try. If you are a veteran and you have a disability or injury this is something you should look into, you have earned these benefits.

Q: How do you know if you could be receiving benefits? Who, exactly, is qualified to receive them?

A: There are three key factors in determining if you might be eligible to obtain VA service connected disability benefits. The first is that you must have done service with either the Army, the Navy, the Marines, the Air Force, or the US Coast Guard. Secondly, you must currently suffer from a disability which began during your years of service, or began before hand and was worsened by doing service. This could be anything from High Blood Pressure to certain types of cancers as well as many other disabilities depending on when and where you served. Third, you have to be able to connect your current disability to your time in the service.

A good illustration of this kind of injury is if you injured your knee while hiking with your some friends while on leave from active duty. Today, even though many years have passed, the problem caused by that old injury is only getting worse, and you will soon need surgery to have the knee replaced. This can be service connected because while you were in the service you had an accident, incident, or illness. Secondly, now that problem is causing pain as well as other problems which you have to be treated for.

Q: Why should I obtain VA service connected disability benefits, how will it help me?

A: If you are successful in being service connected for your disability you could receive a monthly benefit and you become eligible for medical care at your local VA facility. The amount of your monthly benefit will depend on your percentage of service connection granted.

Q: If I am eligible for service connected benefits, and have 10% hearing loss and 30% PTSD, why are my disabilities considered only 30% connected to my military service?

A: The VA has a rating schedule that they use to determine what percentage is to be granted for each disability depending on the severity of the disability. Rather than using math to determine these percentages, they use a rating chart to give you a total final percentage, or rating. Because determining a percentage of service connection is quite complex, if you feel that the percentage awarded you is insufficient for your disability, you should speak to a professional about your options.

Q: My cousin has obtained a 65% service connection for the exact same disability I have. Why?

A: This happens because Veteran Affairs determines all service connection percentages individually, based on the severity of a veterans disability. Again, there is a rating schedule that determines the amount of benefit and the percentage of service connection that each person receives.

Q: Can I still work and receive VA service connected disability benefits?

A: Yes. VA service connected disability benefits are not like Social Security Disability benefits in this respect. If you obtain benefits for a service connected disability, but are still able to work, then you are entitled to keep working and receiving benefits. Your disability benefits are not reduced or annulled if you are earning an income.

Q: Can I obtain benefits from both Social Security Disability and the Dept. of Veteran Affairs? A: You can. [Social security disability](#) does look at earned income but VA service connected disability benefits are not earned income so these benefits do not interfere with one another.

Q: My husband/wife was in the service and receiving VA service connected disability benefits but they have passed. Am I eligible to get his or her VA benefits?

A: There are benefits for surviving spouses and dependent children. However, every case is different, and you need to be sure to speak to a professional before moving forward.

Q: How do I file a claim?

A: Veteran Affairs has laws to follow called "Veteran Friendly Laws." The VA has the duty to help you file a claim and walk you through the process of obtaining benefits. There are Regional Offices in every state and there are organizations set up to assist the veterans at no cost to you. You can find your local VA Regional Office as well as Veterans Service Organizations on the VA website at www.va.gov.

Q: Can I employ a lawyer to help me?

A: Veteran Affairs has some laws that help a lawyer to know when he or she can represent you for a fee, and when he or she cannot. Some attorneys will represent you on a Pro Bono basis, meaning they wont charge you, and others will have you sign a Contract with a fee stipulation. You should contact a local attorneys office for more information and specifics regarding your claim.

Q: I already get benefits for a service connected ability. Is there any other benefit I can receive?

A: The answer to this question will depend on your situation. If you have a service connected disability and it has gotten worse, you can request for an increase in your rating which would result in higher benefits if a higher rating is granted. The VA also has benefits for those veterans that are unemployable due to their service connected disability. To apply for these benefits there is a separate form that needs to be filled out and filed with the VA. If you feel you are unemployable and should be receiving higher benefits you should contact a VSO or an Attorney to answer your questions and possibly assist you in obtaining these benefits. The VA also has benefits for those individuals that are unable to care for themselves on a regular basis or those that are unable to leave their home most of the time. This is called homebound compensation. If you need assistance in caring for yourself but are having trouble paying for the care you should look into this option.

Because each claim is different, getting the benefits that you are entitled to can be a complex and confusing process. The VAs website has a lot of information on what kind of benefits there are beyond disability benefits and what you can do to receive these benefits. If, as a veteran, you were injured in any way during service, or saw your previous disability or injury exacerbated by your service, it is very important to look into your benefits options. You served for our country and you may be entitled to veterans benefits.

About the Author

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