

1ST DISTRICT SERVICE OFFICER VA & R REPORT FOR APRIL 2022



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Currently, there are two categories of claims that can be granted secondary service connection under VA regulation 3.310, "Disabilities that are proximately due to, or aggravated by, service-connected disease or injury." The first category includes claims for which there is an initial service-connected disability, and then a subsequent disability or disabilities found to be proximately due to (caused by) the service-connected disability. One example of this type of claim would be loss of limb due to amputation occurring subsequent to a service-connected diabetes diagnosis. The loss of a limb, it might be argued, should be service connected in addition to the diabetes because the amputation may not have been needed had the veteran not developed diabetes. In accord with a 1995 court decision (Allen v. Brown, 7 Vet. App. 439), VA will also grant service connection under this regulation in claims where there is an increase in the severity of nonservice-connected disability that is found to be due to aggravation by a service-connected disability. These are called secondary service connection by aggravation claims.

The Department of Veterans Affairs will change its disability ratings criteria for mental health conditions, sleep apnea and tinnitus, part of a major overhaul of the review process to ensure that compensation matches veterans' medical conditions and needs, department officials say. The VA plans to update its Schedule for Rating Disabilities -- its guide for determining how it evaluates and provides benefits for service-connected disabilities -- for mental health conditions, to include their impact on veterans' lives, and abolish the "0%" disability rating for any service-connected mental health diagnosis in favor of a 10% minimum, according to a notice published Tuesday in the Federal Register. For tinnitus, the department will get rid of its stand-alone rating and consider the condition a symptom of whatever underlying disease is its cause.

Did you know Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) and Special Home Adaptation (SHA) grants are exclusively for veterans with certain severe, life-altering service-connected disabilities, such as loss or loss of use of more than one limb, blindness in both eyes and severe burns? These grants are more comprehensive and cover costs associated with buying, building, or changing a permanent home.

Veterans are entitled to cremation services or burial at one of the nation's national cemeteries. They are also entitled to burial at sea. Spouses or dependents may also be entitled to this same honor. However, there are additional steps that families must take to arrange for a burial of a military spouse, so it pays to plan for this arrangement if you are a spouse of a disabled veteran.

Did you know Gulf War veterans with chronic disabilities lasting 6 months or longer may receive disability compensation for undiagnosed illnesses or medically unexplained chronic multi-symptom illnesses defined by a cluster of signs or symptoms that occur within a specific period of time

Did you know veterans with a service-connected disability who use a prosthetic or orthopedic appliance, or whose service-connected skin condition requires prescribed medication that severely damages outer garments may be eligible for an annual clothing allowance?

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced the formal launch of 1-800-MyVA411 (1-800-698-2411), a single access point to all VA contact centers.

The number is available 24 hours-a-day, 365 days-a-year to serve Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors.

Responding to Veteran feedback on the challenges of knowing the right number for VA assistance, 1-800-MyVA411, serves all members of the Veteran community seeking information or help. Veterans and their families can still reach the Veterans Crisis Line directly at 1-800-273-8255 and pressing 1, by Chat or by texting 838255. The White House VA Hotline is also still available at 1-855-948-2311 for Veterans and their families to share compliments and concerns.

1-800-MyVA411 provides information on:

- COVID-19 updates.
- Health care eligibility and enrollment.
- VA benefits, such as disability, compensation and pension, education programs, caregiver support, insurance, home loans, and burial headstones and markers among others.
- The nearest VA medical centers, benefits offices or cemeteries to Veterans, VA Medical Center operational updates and connection to VA Medical Center operators.
- Directory assistance and technical support for VA.gov .
- Debt and payment options.

Home care can be covered under an initiative called the Veterans Choice Program (VCP). The VCP lets a veteran receive care from a community medical provider, paid for by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) when the nearest VA facility can't provide that kind of care. The following are other reasons the VCP will cover home care:

- The VA doesn't offer the service needed.
- The VA can't arrange for an appointment for the service needed within 30 days.
- The veteran lives more than 40 miles from the nearest VA facility.
- The veteran would have to travel by air, boat or ferry to receive treatment.
- The veteran faces an excessive burden in traveling to receive treatment, such as a health condition that makes travel prohibitive.

Did you know the VA has plans within the next two years to begin furnishing urns for storing the cremated remains of deceased veterans? Families will have the option of receiving a free headstone or burial urn, but not both. Currently, most veterans are eligible to receive a free headstone upon their death, but not an urn. Did you know veterans who receive the free VA-issued headstone and are buried in either a state or private cemetery will be able to have their spouse's name engraved on the headstone at no cost? Currently, the family must pay to have the spouse's name engraved on a VA-issued headstone. This will be effective for deaths going back to October 1, 2019.



please Remember..... That all gave some, but many gave all!