

Veterans Outreach

Goal of the Project: Help veterans obtain the assistive technology devices and services they need to live more independent and satisfying lives.





PARESH
THE KHALEEJ TIMES
Dubai
U.A.E.

THE MISSION AT HOME

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There are 24 million living veterans in the U.S., of whom roughly 3.5 million (and their survivors) receive disability benefits.

Disability compensation is money paid to veterans with “service connected disabilities” – meaning that the disability was the result of an illness, disease, or injury incurred or aggravated while the person was on active military service.

In 2005, the United States was paying \$34.5 billion in annual disability entitlement pay to veterans from previous wars, including 211,729 from the first Gulf War, 916,220 from Vietnam, 161,512 from Korea, 356,190 from World War II, and 3 from World War I.

Understanding the New Issues

Nearly 4,000 U.S. troops have been killed in Iraq, and more than 58,000 have been wounded, injured, or fallen seriously ill. A further 7,300 troops have been wounded or injured or fallen seriously ill in Afghanistan. One hundred thousand U.S. soldiers have returned from the war suffering from serious mental health disorders, a significant fraction of which will be chronic afflictions.

Stiglitz, J. and L.J. Bilmes. The Three Trillion Dollar War: The True Cost of the Iraq Conflict, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2008

Wounded troops returning home are caught in a crossfire of bureaucratic confusion between the Defense Department and the Department of Veterans Affairs – resulting in shoddy outpatient facilities, endless red tape, and long delays in getting basic care and financial compensation.

Ibid.

Among the Initial Questions

Are you a veteran?

If yes, are you enrolled at your local
Veterans Affairs Medical Center?

If yes, again, are you currently getting health
care benefits?

Understanding the VA System

www.va.gov

- Veterans Health Administration
- Veterans Benefits Administration



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Health Care Enrollment

Veteran must complete VA Form 10-10EZ, application for health benefits. The veterans must also provide financial information. Eligibility for particular health care benefits will be based upon whether the veteran has *service-connected or non-service connected* health care needs.

Enrollment for health care benefits via the VA 10-10EZ is not the same as going through the Compensation and Pension Service (benefits). The VA 10-10EZ is for health care only (includes services to people who are blind).

Enrollment

After the paperwork has been filed with the VA (at a VA medical center or via mail), a veteran will be notified if he/she will be enrolled. At this time, the veteran may be assigned a priority group*.

While many veterans qualify for enrollment and cost-free health care services based on a compensable service-connected condition, most veterans will be asked to complete a financial assessment as part of their enrollment application process. This information will be used to determine the applicant's enrollment priority group.

*Priority grouping is extremely important!

Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Standard Benefits

- Immunizations
- Physical Examinations (including eye and hearing exams)
- Health Care Assessments
- Screening tests
- Health Education Programs

Outpatient Diagnostic and Treatment Services

- Medical
- Surgical (including reconstructive/plastic surgery as a result of disease or trauma)
- Mental Health
- Substance Abuse

Hospital Inpatient Diagnostic and Treatment Services

- Medical
- Surgical (including reconstructive/plastic surgery as a result of disease or trauma)
- Mental Health
- Substance Abuse

Additional Medical Benefits

- Prescription Drugs (when prescribed by a VA physician)
- Dental Care
- Durable Medical Equipment (wheelchairs, scooters)
- Eyeglasses
- Hearing Aids
- Orthopedic, Prosthetic and Rehabilitative Devices
- Clothing Allowance (\$670)
- Home Improvement and Structural Alterations Benefit (\$4,100 service-connected; \$1,200 non-service connected.)

Benefits for Veterans Who Are Blind

Blind and visually impaired veterans may be eligible for services at a VA medical center or for admission to a VA blind rehabilitation center.

In addition, blind veterans enrolled in the VA health care system may receive:

- 1. A total health and benefits review.
- 2. Adjustment to blindness training and counseling.
- 3. Home improvements and structural alterations.
- 4. Specially adapted housing and adaptations.
- 5. Automobile grant.
- 6. Low-vision devices and training in their use.
- 7. Electronic and mechanical aids for the blind, including adaptive computers and computer-assisted devices such as reading machines and electronic travel aids.
- 8. Guide dogs, including cost of training for the veteran to learn to work with the dog.
- 9. Talking books, tapes and Braille literature.

Benefits for Veterans Who Have Low-Vision

Eligible visually impaired veterans (who are not blind) enrolled in the VA health care system may receive:

- 1. A total health and benefits review.
- 2. Adjustment to vision loss counseling and training.
- 3. Low-vision devices and training in their use.
- 4. Electronic and mechanical aids for the visually impaired, including adaptive computers and computer-assisted devices such as reading machines and electronic travel aids, and training in their use.

Veterans Benefits Administration

Compensation & Pension Service administers a variety of benefits and services for veterans who have a *service-connected disability* (as well as to their dependents and survivors.)

Burden is on the veteran to provide documentation on injuries, illnesses, from medical records, information from family, friends, neighbors, physicians, psychologists, psychiatrists.

Note: Most veterans who have a service-connected disability will enter the VA system through “Comp and Pension”.

VBA (compensation)

- Education
- Life Insurance
- Vocational Rehabilitation (vehicles, adaptations, and other AT devices)
- Burials and Memorials
- Specially Adapted Housing (up to \$50,000; some funding if living with a family member)
- Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance (covers unpaid principle up to \$90,000 on the mortgage loan)
- Disability Compensation (tax free) ranging from \$115 to \$2,527/month

Disability Compensation Rates for Veterans

Veteran's Disability Rating	Monthly Rate Paid to Veterans
10 percent	\$117
20 percent	\$230
30 percent	\$356
40 percent	\$512
50 percent	\$728
60 percent	\$921
70 percent	\$1,161
80 percent	\$1,349
90 percent	\$1,517
100 percent	\$2,527

**Veterans with disability ratings of at least 30 percent are eligible for additional allowances for dependents, including spouses, minor children, children between the ages of 18 and 23 who are attending school, children who are permanently incapable of self-support because of a disability arising before age 18, and dependent parents. The additional amount depends on the disability rating and the number of dependents.*

Additional Programs for Veterans

- **PATF** (vehicle gaps, other AT not included in vocational rehabilitation, home modifications).
- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, if disability is not service-related.
- Medical Assistance waiver programs for people who do not have a service connected disability.
- Link with veterans' organizations including United Spinal Association, Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion and others.

What Do We Plan To Do Next?

- Draft outreach brochure and get feedback from veterans and families.
- Get in touch with the VA Medical and Benefits Centers (Prosthetic and Social Services Departments) and other relevant offices and let them know about PATF.
- Get in touch with the vendors the VA has contracts with for DME and tell them about PATF.
- Talk with, and provide information to, the veterans organizations about PATF.