



POLICY BRIEF
Veterans' Health Care in Rural Virginia
Supplement I - Veteran Benefit and Eligibility Criteria
December, 2011

Introduction

A universal definition for “veteran” to establish eligibility for benefits does not exist. As federal and state legislators pass legislation to create various veteran centered programs, the definition of veteran is typically developed according to the program, not on what definition of veteran may have preceded the current program. However, definitions for “veteran” generally used by Virginia’s programs and agencies typically have certain elements in common. A veteran must have been discharged from active military service with a discharge status other than dishonorable, and National Guard Members and Reservists can meet the definition of veteran and be eligible for services by being called to active duty by Federal Executive Order.

Organizational and Policy Level Criteria

Virginia Department of Veterans Services (VDVS) - Eligibility for most federal and state benefits administered by VDVS is based on discharge from active military service under other than dishonorable conditions. VDVS Benefits Services Specialists, however, will work with veterans to have their discharge status upgraded. Active service means full-time service as a member of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, or as a commissioned officer of the public health service, the Environmental Services Administration, or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Current and former members of the Selected Reserve may be eligible for certain benefits, such as home loan guaranties and education, if they meet time-in-service and other criteria. Men and women veterans with similar service are entitled to the same federal and state veteran’s benefits.¹

Virginia Wounded Warrior Program - This statewide program serves veterans of any era who are Virginia residents; members of the Virginia National Guard and Armed Forces Reserves not in active federal service; and family members of those veterans and service members. Through a network of local, federal and state partnerships, the VWWP assists Veterans with an array of services from housing to health care, with a specific focus on psychological health, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and traumatic brain injury. VWWP will work with any veteran, regardless of discharge status.²

The Code of Virginia - The Commonwealth of Virginia defines veteran as “an individual who has served in the active military, naval or air service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable.”³

Coverage and Financing of Health Care

TRICARE: TRICARE is the Department of Defense's health care program that is available to active duty service members and retirees, their family members, survivors and others who are registered in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). It is also available to members of the National Guard and Reserves and their families and these benefits will vary based on military status. TRICARE offers three levels of coverage. The levels of coverage are administered in nine plan options which are dependent on beneficiary category and geographic location. The fees and out of pocket expenses are dependent on the TRICARE plan in which the service member and their family is participating.⁴

US Department of Veterans Affairs – Qualifying for health care services through the U.S.

Department of Veterans Affairs and at VA Medical Facilities is based on a combination of career military service, active duty experience (National Guard and Reserves), and service related injury and medical conditions.

- Eligibility for most veterans' health care benefits is based solely on active military service in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, or Coast Guard (or Merchant Marines during WW II), and discharged under other than dishonorable conditions.
- Reservists and National Guard members who were called to active duty by a Federal Executive Order may qualify for VA health care benefits. Returning service members, including Reservists and National Guard members who served on active duty in a theater of combat operations have special eligibility for hospital care, medical services, and nursing home care for five years following discharge from active duty.
- Activated reservists and members of the National Guard are eligible if they served on active duty in a theater of combat operations after Nov. 11, 1998, and, have been discharged under other than dishonorable conditions.⁵

References

¹ Virginia Department of Veteran Services. Veterans Benefits. Eligibility. Retrieved on November 9, 2011 from <http://www.dvs.virginia.gov/veterans-benefits.shtml>.

² Virginia Wounded Warrior Program. About Us. Retrieved on November 9, 2011 from <http://wearevirginiaveterans.org/About-Us.aspx>

³ Virginia General Assembly. Retrieved on November 9, 2011 from <http://legis.state.va.us/Section 2.2-2001 of the Code of Virginia>.

⁴ TRICARE Benefit At-a-Glance. TRICARE Welcome, TRICARE Beneficiaries. TRICARE (Health Net). USA.gov Retrieved November 9, 2011 from <http://tricare.mil/mybenefit/home/overview/WhatIsTRICARE/TRICAREBenefitAtAGlance?ref=Benefits at a Glance>

⁵ United States Department of Veterans Affairs. Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents and Survivors 2011 Edition. Chapter 1. Retrieved November 9, 2011 from http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book/benefits_chap01.asp