

ELDER LAW REVIEW

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Veterans and Benefits

With nearly 10 million veterans in the U.S. over the age of 65 and 1.4 million over the age of 85, understanding available programs and services for this population is a critical need for health and human services professionals.

Sorting through the myriad of benefits, programs, and resources for this population can be a difficult task. The aim of this article will be to provide a starting point for some benefits available to this population rather than attempting to provide an exhaustive list.

It is also important to note that even for those who do receive military benefits, the military cannot meet all the needs of our older veterans. For this reason, tapping into community-based services and supports will be crucial for effective care management. Connecting older veterans with the services and supports they need starts with the recognition that in many instances, services and programs available to older adults may generally serve the needs of this special population. These programs include area agencies on aging, senior centers, local senior corps programming, healthcare organizations, and more. Older veterans will qualify for and can participate in many existing community programs.

The U.S. Veteran's Administration (VA) offers a wide range of benefits generally to service veterans in addition to benefits specifically designed for older veterans. Benefits are administered through the branches of the VA: the National Cemetery Administration (NCA),

Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), and the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). To illustrate the scope of VA benefits, health care services provided by the VHA alone amount to nearly 7 million older adults who represent more than 50% of VA patients. General VA Benefits include healthcare services, life insurance, pension and income replacement, education and employment services and benefits, home loans, and burial benefits.

Visit www.minneapolis.va.gov/calendar.asp for the Minneapolis VA Health Care System's upcoming classes and events offered to veterans. One event is the Red Carpet Orientation. Veterans are able to attend the orientation and receive information regarding vet benefits and how to qualify.

In addition to federal veterans' benefits, many states offer local benefits and supports for veterans. It is important to understand that such benefits can only be accessed through a state-level department of veterans' affairs office and should not be confused with federal veterans' benefits program. Local benefits can include special business loans for veterans, property tax relief programs, park passes, nursing and rehabilitation services, local burial benefits, and advocacy services. Visit www.va.gov/statedva.htm for your state's information.

The website militarybenefits.info/military-discounts/ provides a vast list of companies that offer discounts to service members, retired military, veterans, spouses and their families.

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