

# **Planning for Your Release**

**A Guide for Incarcerated Veterans**



**NATIONAL  
COALITION  
*for*  
HOMELESS  
VETERANS**

**Updated December 2012**

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### MISSION

The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans will end homelessness among veterans by shaping public policy, promoting collaboration, and building the capacity of service providers.



*Preparation of this item was funded by the United States Department of Labor under Grant No. HV-20796-10-75-5-11. This document does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Labor, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.*

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## SECTION I

### Using This Guide and Seeking Help

This guide is for you to use to plan for your release and to keep as a reference after your release. It includes addresses, phone numbers and websites you can use to find out about programs and other help that is available after your release. You may want to ask a friend or family member to help you find the information you need if you don't have phone or internet access. Keep in mind that **this guide does not include all of the services available**. What is available in one area may be different from what is available in another, so be sure to check local resources to learn about services in your area.

### Steps to Take While Incarcerated

While you are in prison, find out which unit in your facility can help you plan for your release (often the education or transfer unit). Classes may be offered so you can work on skills development and prepare for life after release. **You don't want to risk homelessness once you are released, so take advantage of the opportunities available to you.**

Begin thinking about what specifically you will need upon release. Ask yourself these kinds of questions: Will I need housing? Will I need medical, substance abuse or mental health care? Do I need to learn a job skill? Do I have any other legal issues? How do I restart my Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or VA checks?

Make a list of your needs. Remember that this is just a tool to help you get organized. A sample list might look like this:

1. I need a place to live.
2. I need a job.
3. I need clothing to wear to work.
4. I want to get counseling for PTSD.
5. I owe child support.
6. I need to find out what federal benefits I can get as a veteran.

Think about your list as you read through this guide. Who do you think can help you with each of your needs? Is there one organization

that may be able to work with you on many different things, or do you need to contact several agencies? Keep track of the steps you take, including the dates and names of people you contact for information or assistance. Although this guide provides *national* addresses for many organizations, we recommend you **check your phone book for local, county and state agencies that know what help is available in your area.**

When writing a letter to request information, **be clear**. Keep your letter short, to the point, and write legibly. Include the following information:

- ✓ Your name and contact information
- ✓ A brief statement about your current situation
- ✓ Your specific request
- ✓ What you have done so far (Example: I have written to \_\_\_\_\_ organization and they suggested I contact you.)
- ✓ Any restrictions for mailings (Example: Mail with staples or paper clips will not be accepted by my prison facility.)

When contacting an agency for help by mail, email or phone, **be persistent and polite** in order to get results. Ask questions if information is not clear to you. Remember that organizations are often staffed by volunteers who are eager to help but may not have the answers you are looking for. **If someone cannot help you, ask about who can.**

The Internet can also be helpful to find information about VA benefits and community resources in your area. This guide includes web addresses, when available. Ask to use a computer in your facility, or visit the public library after release. Computer access may also be provided at One-Stop Career Centers (also referred to as job service or employment offices).

**Section II** of this guide provides information about assistance for specific needs. **Section III** covers basic information about seeking VA benefits. The last page contains a **checklist** that summarizes each section of this guide.

## SECTION II HELP FOR VETERANS

This section includes resources that can help you get back on your feet. Remember to check the phone book for local, county and state agencies that know what services are available in the area to assist you. Some organizations may have waiting lists, require an interview or have specific rules about whom they serve. You may ask if your name can be put on a waiting list as your release date approaches.

### Toll-free Numbers

Crisis and other toll-free numbers are often listed inside the front cover or in first few pages of the phone book. You may also want to check under “Social Services” in the blue or yellow pages.

- **Department of Veterans Affairs** ♦ [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)
  - ◆ Benefits: 1-800-827-1000
  - ◆ Medical Centers: 1-877-222-8387
  - ◆ Nat’l Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255 (TALK) (veterans press “1”)
  - ◆ Homeless Veterans Hotline: 1-877-424-3838 (1-877-4AID-VET)
  - ◆ Benefits: 1-800-827-1000 Veterans’ Special Issues Helpline: 1-800-749-8387
- **National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Call Center**  
A 24-hour national alcohol and drug abuse addiction and treatment hotline: 1-800-784-6776
- **National AIDS Hotline**  
Talk to someone who knows about HIV/AIDS and can tell you about AIDS services in your city or state: 1-800-232-4636
- **National Coalition for Homeless Veterans** ♦ [www.nchv.org](http://www.nchv.org)  
1-800-838-4357 (1-800-VET-HELP)

### Where to Start

Check the local phone book yellow pages under “Homeless” or “Social Service Organizations” for a list of many *local* organizations that offer different services, which may include clothing, public trans-

portation tokens, emergency shelter and more. You may need to contact several agencies to find all the services you need. Services provided by *government* agencies are listed in the blue pages found near the front of the phone book. Check with your local Public Assistance Office to find out about available programs and their guidelines. We have included some guidance below, but your local organizations are your best resources. **Remember, it never hurts to ask!**

### *For Veterans Only*

- **Departments of Veterans Affairs** offer state-based incarcerated veterans re-entry guides online. These guides include local resources with contact information for VA facilities in your state, as well as programs offering employment and housing opportunities. To view the guide for your state, visit [http://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/docs/Reentry/09\\_??.pdf](http://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/docs/Reentry/09_??.pdf) (*Replace ?? with your state’s postal abbreviation, eg. for Alabama insert AL*).
- **State Departments of Veterans Affairs** provide many services which differ from state to state, but may include assistance with the benefits claims process, readjustment counseling, crisis intervention, loans, family counseling and employment assistance. Check the front of the phone book under “State Government, Veterans Affairs,” or go to [www.nasdva.net](http://www.nasdva.net).
- **National Coalition for Homeless Veterans** has a national database of homeless veteran service providers that offer a broad spectrum of assistance. From housing to healthcare, and employment to legal help, a service provider near you will likely know where to refer you to the services you need. To find a homeless veteran service provider near you, visit [http://nchv.org/index.php/help/help/locate\\_organization/](http://nchv.org/index.php/help/help/locate_organization/).

### *For Veterans and Non-Veterans*

- **National Coalition for the Homeless** has a directory of shelters and homeless assistance programs online. This does not list every program in the country, so be sure to check your phone book for local programs. Go to [www.nationalhomeless.org/directories](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/directories). The website also includes a directory of statewide and local advocacy organizations. Not all of these coalitions provide direct services, but they may

be able to tell you about local programs.

- **Salvation Army** provides services, including shelter, for homeless individuals and families. Check the phone book for a local post; write to Salvation Army National Headquarters, 615 Slaters Lane, PO Box 269, Alexandria, VA 22313; or go to [www.salvationarmyusa.org](http://www.salvationarmyusa.org).
- **United Way** provides a variety of services through local organizations. Check the phone book for a local post, or locate local organizations online at [www.liveunited.org](http://www.liveunited.org). Dial 2-1-1 in some states to access local emergency services.
- Local churches and **faith-based organizations** such as Catholic Charities, Salvation Army and Volunteers of America may have a variety of programs to assist you. Find these organizations by calling your county or city Department of Social Services. Check the phone book blue pages for the number.
- **Traveler's Aid International** provides emergency travel vouchers for homeless individuals and families in crisis. For help in your area, go to [www.travelersaid.org](http://www.travelersaid.org) and click on "Find Assistance."

## Housing

It is important to know that you have a place to go when you are released. The first step in returning to the community is finding a place to stay. This section includes ways to locate emergency shelter, transitional housing and permanent housing assistance. Transitional or temporary housing can serve as a step toward full independence upon your release. However, there are often waiting lists, so you should ask about applying as soon as possible. If you are released and find yourself homeless, emergency assistance is available.

### **Emergency and Transitional Housing**

#### *For Veterans Only*

- **National Coalition for Homeless Veterans'** members provide services to homeless veterans around the nation. To find out if there are homeless veteran service providers in your area, call 1-800-VET-HELP; write to NCHV, 333 ½ Pennsylvania Ave., SE, Washington, DC 20003-1148; or go to [www.nchv.org](http://www.nchv.org).
- Every **VA medical center** has a Homeless Veteran Program

Coordinator who is responsible for helping homeless or at-risk veterans. To find the VA Medical Center serving your area, look in the phone book blue pages under "United States Government, Veterans Affairs"; call the VA (toll-free) at 1-877-222-8387; or go to [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) and click on "Locations" then "Hospitals & Clinics."

#### *For Veterans and Non-Veterans*

- Look in the phone book yellow pages under "Homeless" or "Social Service Organizations" for local shelters and organizations.
- Look in the phone book blue pages under local, city or county government Department of Social Services "Human Services" or "Homeless Shelters," or call the Office of the Mayor for information about low-income housing coalitions or homeless advocacy groups who may know what is available.
- To find a list of emergency shelters for men, women and families in every state, visit the **Department of Housing and Urban Development's** site at [www.hud.gov/homeless/hmlsagen.cfm](http://www.hud.gov/homeless/hmlsagen.cfm).
- **Coalitions for the Homeless** are listed in the phone books of many cities and urban counties. You may also find local housing information at [www.nationalhomeless.org/directories](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/directories).

### **Long-Term or Permanent Housing**

- **Public housing** waiting lists can be long, but the length of time can vary from place to place. Even if you are not sure where you want to live yet, apply to get on the waiting list so that you have as many options as possible. To learn how to apply, contact the local housing authority listed in the phone book blue pages under "Local Government, Public Housing Authority."

## Finding and Keeping a Job

Finding a job may be hard and can seem overwhelming, but it is the key to successful reintegration back into society. When you are released you may find that you are completely starting over. You should ask for job counseling and training while incarcerated so you are prepared to work when you are released. Don't wait until you get out to start thinking about what you will do to support yourself. **Start planning now!**

### *For Veterans Only*

- **Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs)** work to help veterans find and keep jobs. DVOP specialists develop job and training opportunities for veterans with service-connected disabilities, linking veterans with employers and making sure follow-up services are provided. LVER specialists are located in state employment offices (also called One-Stop Career Centers or employment offices). To find a DVOP or LVER near you, visit your state employment service office listed in the phone book blue pages under "State Government, Employment Agencies," or go to <http://dvoplverlocator.nvti.ucdenver.edu>.
- Many organizations provide employment and training services to homeless veterans to help them get back into the workforce through the **Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP)**. These organizations provide job search support, counseling, job placement assistance, financial literacy, classroom and on-the-job training, and referrals to supportive services. To find out if there is a program near you, call the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) State Director (DVET) listed for your state on the Department of Labor website at [www.dol.gov/vets/aboutvets/contacts/main.htm](http://www.dol.gov/vets/aboutvets/contacts/main.htm).
- The VA's **Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment** services help veterans with service-connected disabilities by providing job training and counseling. Services include help finding a job, on-the-job training, job development and vocational training. If you are not eligible for these services, a VA counselor may help you find other options, goals or programs. Call 1-877-222-8387 for the VA Regional Office (VARO) nearest you, or go to [www.vba.va.gov/VBA/benefits/offices.asp](http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA/benefits/offices.asp). For more information, visit [www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/index.htm](http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/index.htm).
- Department of Veterans Affairs' **Compensated Work Therapy (CWT)** program is available to some veterans who have a primary psychiatric or medical diagnosis and are referred from certain VA programs. CWT provides a structured environment where clients participate in job training activities at least 30 hours per week. Contact your local VA Medical Center to see if you qualify. Call 1-877-222-8387 to find the Medical Center nearest you.

- Department of Veterans Affairs' **Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP)** offers up to 12 months of training assistance to unemployed veterans. VRAP training is available to veterans who: are at least 35 but no more than 60 years old; are unemployed on the date of application; received an other than dishonorable discharge; are not eligible for any other VA education program; are not receiving VA compensation due to unemployability; and are not enrolled in a federal or state job training program. For more information on how to apply, visit <http://benefits.va.gov/vow/education.htm>.

### *For Veterans and Non-Veterans*

- Each state has a **Vocational Rehabilitation** program that helps people with disabilities find and keep jobs. Apply for these services immediately after your release. Look in the phone book blue pages under "Department of Human Resources" or "Department of Education" (it may be different for each state), then "Rehabilitation," or search the internet for "Vocational Rehabilitation" in your state.
- **CareerOneStop** is a resource for job seekers, sponsored by the Department of Labor. It is a career-oriented resource that offers tools to help job seekers, students, and career professionals in all aspects and places of their career. One-Stop Career Centers are located across the country. For more information on CareerOneStop and the resources available, visit <http://www.careeronestop.org>, or call 1-877-348-0502.

## **Health**

### *If eligible for veterans' benefits:*

- We encourage you to enroll in the **VA Health Care** system as soon as you are released. Every VA medical center has a homeless services coordinator who helps veterans and their families. Call 1-877-222-8387 to find the medical center nearest you.
- VA also offers the **Health Care for Re-entry Veterans (HCRV) Program**, which is designed to address the community re-entry needs of incarcerated veterans. HCRV services include: outreach and pre-release assessments services for veterans in prison; referrals and linkages to medical, psychiatric, and social services, including employment services upon release; and short term case management assis-

tance upon release. To find the HCRV contact for your state, visit <http://va.gov/homeless/reentry.asp>.

*If ineligible for veterans' benefits, free or low-cost health care may be available from the following sources:*

- **Department of Social Services** can tell you where to find health care facilities for the homeless. Check the phone book blue pages under local, city or county government for the number.
- **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** has a list of health care providers working with homeless people. For a list of providers in your state, go to <http://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov>.
- **Free clinics** are run by many local organizations and communities. Look in the phone book blue pages under "Public Health" to contact a local government office for clinics in your area.

*Special health information for veterans:*

- If you think you may be at risk for **AIDS and HIV infection** after your release, contact the nearest VA Medical Center to get tested and seek counseling. Those at highest risk for AIDS and HIV infection are:
  - People who share needles or syringes to inject drugs or steroids
  - Men who have sex with other men
  - Those born to mothers who have HIV
  - People who received blood transfusions before 1985
  - Anyone who has sex with anyone who is at risk for HIV/AIDS
- Veterans, as well as homeless and incarcerated people, are at high risk for **hepatitis C (HCV)**, a serious disease that can cause cirrhosis (scarring of the liver) and liver cancer. If you think you are at risk after your release, contact the nearest VA Medical Center to get tested and seek HCV counseling. You are at risk if:
  - You ever used a needle to inject drugs
  - You had a blood transfusion or organ transplant before 1992
  - You were a health care worker and had contact with blood
  - You were on long-term kidney dialysis
  - Your mother had hepatitis C when she gave birth to you

The Veterans Health Administration also recommends testing if:

- You are a Vietnam-era veteran
- You have had exposure to blood on your skin
- You have had multiple sex partners
- You have tattoos or body piercings
- You have ever snorted cocaine
- You have liver disease
- You have a history of drinking a lot of alcohol
- You have had an abnormal liver function test

## **Substance Abuse & Mental Health Treatment**

*If eligible for veterans' benefits:*

- Contact the Homeless Veteran Program Coordinator at your local **VA Medical Center**. Call 1-877-222-8387 to find the Medical Center nearest you, or visit <http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/gethelp.asp>

*If not eligible for veterans' benefits, the following sources may be able to tell you where to get help:*

- The **HHS Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Routing Service** can refer you to local programs. Call 1-800-662-4357 (HELP).
- **National Alliance for the Mentally Ill** lists community mental health services providers at [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org), or call 1-800-950-6264 (NAMI).
- **Mental Health America** offers support groups, rehabilitation, socialization and housing services through 340 community organizations located across the country. Call 1-800-969-6642, or find a local office at [www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org).

## **Financial Help**

- The American Legion provides **Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA)** from its national headquarters to help maintain a stable environment for children of veterans. To obtain an application, look up a local post in the phone book or contact the National Headquarters (see page 18) to find the post nearest you.

### *For Veterans and Non-Veterans*

- If you are unemployed with little or no income, you may be eligible for the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) – formerly the federal Food Stamp Program. The average monthly benefit in 2011 was about \$138 per person. Call the toll-free information number at 1-800-221-5689, or find a list of hotlines for each state at [www.fns.usda.gov/snap/contact\\_info/hotlines.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/contact_info/hotlines.htm). You can also contact the local Department of Human Services, many drop-in shelters or legal aid services to ask for an application.
- **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)** benefits can be applied for before your release, even though you won't receive the benefits until after you are released. SNAP benefits can be applied for together with SSI. Normally, it takes about three months to review an application, so apply well before your release date. It is best to get help filling out the application. For information or assistance, call 1-800-772-1213 or go to [www.socialsecurity.gov/ssi/text-apply-ussi.htm](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/ssi/text-apply-ussi.htm).
- **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** has an Emergency Food and Shelter Program to help prevent homelessness. Contact your local Office of the Mayor or United Way to ask who awards this money in your area and what the rules are.

### **Legal Help**

- **Veterans Justice Outreach Program (VJO)** specialists, located within VA medical centers, work to connect eligible justice-involved veterans to necessary services. Call 1-877-424-3838 for the VJO specialist in your area or visit <http://www.va.gov/homeless/vjo.asp>.
- **Veteran Treatment Courts** are located throughout the country, offering alternative programs and assistance for veterans with legal problems due to a substance dependency. Call the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans at 1-800-VET-HELP to find out if there is a Veteran Treatment Court in your area.
- **Homeless Court at Stand Down** offers alternative sentencing through assistance for veterans with legal problems. Stand Down events take place across the country, and many have Homeless Court Programs as well as many other services. To view a national schedule

of Stand Down events, visit [http://nchv.org/index.php/service/service/stand\\_down/](http://nchv.org/index.php/service/service/stand_down/).

### *Veteran status issues:*

- Talk to a **Veterans Advocate Service Officer** for help with discharge upgrades, seeking benefits and filing a VA claim (see “Seeking Federal Benefits” on page 16).

### *Other legal issues:*

- Most law is state-specific. Most common legal problems are governed by the law in the state where you live or where the incident occurred. When looking for legal help, make sure that information you find applies to your state or that the lawyer or other service provider is qualified to work in your state.
- The **American Bar Association** has a web site with guidelines about free legal services and links to directories of legal aid offices and pro bono programs. Go to [www.abanet.org/legalservices/findlegalhelp/home.cfm](http://www.abanet.org/legalservices/findlegalhelp/home.cfm).
- **Legal services** or **legal aid offices** have staff lawyers to provide free legal help to low-income clients. Look in the yellow pages for a local legal aid office, or go to <http://www.lsc.gov/local-programs/program-profiles>.
- **Pine Tree Legal Assistance** has an online list of organizations across the nation that provide free legal help to qualifying clients. Go to [www.ptla.org/links/services.htm](http://www.ptla.org/links/services.htm).
- Lawyers in private practice sometimes volunteer in “pro bono” programs to take cases for low-income clients free of charge. Check the yellow pages to contact your **local bar association**, or go to [www.abanet.org/barserv/stlobar.html](http://www.abanet.org/barserv/stlobar.html).

### **Women Veterans**

#### *For Veterans Only*

- All **VA Medical Centers** and many Vet (readjustment counseling) Centers have a designated Women Veterans Program Manager to help women veterans access VA benefits and healthcare services. Call 1-877-222-8387 to find the VA Medical Center nearest you.



In November 2008, the VA began a systemwide initiative to make comprehensive primary care for women veterans available at every VA Medical Center and community-based outpatient clinic. VA medical facilities, however, are in various stages of implementing this initiative.

- All regional offices of the **Veterans Benefits Administration** have a Women Veterans Coordinator to help women veterans apply for VA benefits and assistance programs. Call 1-800-827-1000 to locate your local office, or go to [www.vba.va.gov/VBA/benefits/offices.asp](http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA/benefits/offices.asp).
- Most **State Departments of Veterans Affairs** have a designated Women Veterans Coordinator to help women veterans. Check the phone book blue pages under “State Government, Veterans Affairs,” or go to [www.naswvc.com](http://www.naswvc.com).
- The **Department of Labor Women’s Bureau** works to empower all working women to achieve economic security. One of the Bureau’s priority areas is homeless women veterans, and they provide various resources to help women secure employment at a liveable wage. To contact the Women’s Bureau, call 1-800-827-5335 or visit <http://www.dol.gov/wb/>.

### **SECTION III**

## **SEEKING FEDERAL BENEFITS**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) publishes a booklet called “**Federal Benefits for Veterans and Their Dependents**” that describes the types of benefits available and lists the addresses and phone numbers for VA facilities nationwide. Write to your VA Regional Office (VARO) for a copy. Call 1-800-827-1000 or go to [www.vba.va.gov/VBA/benefits/offices.asp](http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA/benefits/offices.asp) to find information about benefits and addresses for regional offices.

### **Eligibility for VA Benefits While Incarcerated**

Your ability to get most VA benefits depends on your discharge from the military. In general, you are eligible for services if you were discharged under honorable conditions; this includes general discharges. You and your family may be able to get certain benefits while you are in prison, but these benefits are limited if you are convicted of a felony and imprisoned for more than 60 days. Payments are not reduced for veterans participating in work-release programs, living in halfway houses or under community control.

**Disability Compensation** is money paid to veterans who were injured or who have a disease that started or got worse during active duty. If you are already receiving disability compensation and are in prison, your payment will be reduced to the 10 percent disability rate beginning on the 61st day you are in prison. For example, if you were receiving \$201 or more before your incarceration, your new payment amount will be \$104; if your disability rating was 10 percent before you were incarcerated, your new payment will be at the 5 percent rate. However, you may apply to have the difference awarded to eligible family members.

**VA Disability Pension** is money that may be available to low-income veterans who are permanently and totally disabled, but not as a result of military service, and have 90 days or more of active military service, at least one day of which was during a period of war. Payments are stopped on the 61st day of incarceration. You may apply to have some of this money awarded to family members.

**VA medical care** is not provided to veterans in prison, but VA health facilities may provide care to you after your release. Contact 1-877-222-8387 for the VA medical center nearest you.

### **Benefits for Your Family**

Even though you can only receive part of your disability compensation while in prison, the rest may be awarded to your family if they depend upon your income. For example, if you are rated at 80 percent disabled but can only receive the 10 percent rate while in prison, your dependent family may be given up to the remaining 70 percent.

Your family members will only get the shared amounts if they can show financial need. This applies to your spouse, children or dependent parents who are applying for these benefits. Send a letter to the VA Regional Office (VARO) that has jurisdiction over your case to apply to have your family receive part of your benefits.

### **Benefits Payments**

There is a **60-day “grace period”** following a conviction when you may still receive full benefits. **To avoid an overpayment**, it is important that you notify the VARO immediately when you go to prison if you are receiving payments. If you do not notify the VA and receive an overpayment, you and your family will lose all financial payments until the debt is paid.

For example, Joe is a veteran who receives a VA pension of \$807 per month. He commits a crime and is incarcerated but doesn't tell the VA right away and keeps getting paid for 6 months. **Joe is overpaid a total of \$3,228.** After serving his sentence of 18 months, he is released and applies to the VA to have his pension restarted. The new pension rate is \$830 per month, but the VA will use that amount to start repaying the \$3,228 debt. Joe's first real check will start **four months after he is released and will be for the amount of \$92!** Joe has to go at least four months without that income.

Your award for compensation or pension benefits should resume from the date you are released, as long as the VA receives notice of release within one year. This includes placement in a community

treatment center or halfway house. **Remember, you must notify the VA when you are released to restart your payments.**

### **Help Seeking Benefits**

If you would like to receive benefits or think you have a pending claim before the VA, it is best to get professional help.

- Check the phone book blue pages for a **County Veteran Service Officer** in your area, or call your county government information line to see if there is one nearby.
- Many **veterans service organizations (VSOs)** have trained staff who can help you with your VA claim and can legally represent you before the VA. Some also help homeless and at-risk veterans find the supportive services they need. Contact any VSO listed below to see if there is a service representative near you.

#### **The American Legion**

Nat'l Headquarters, 700 North Pennsylvania St., PO Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206  
1-317-630-1200 ♦ [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org)

#### **AMVETS**

Nat'l Headquarters, 4647 Forbes Blvd., Lanham, MD 20706  
1-877-726-8387 ♦ [www.amvets.org](http://www.amvets.org)

#### **Blinded Veterans Association**

477 H. St., NW, Washington, DC 20001  
1-800-669-7079 ♦ [www.bva.org](http://www.bva.org)

#### **Disabled American Veterans**

Nat'l Headquarters, 3725 Alexandria Pike, Cold Spring, KY 41076  
1-877-426-2838 ♦ [www.dav.org](http://www.dav.org)

#### **Jewish War Veterans**

1811 R St., NW, Washington, DC 20009  
1-202-265-6280 ♦ [www.jwv.org](http://www.jwv.org)

#### **Military Order of the Purple Heart**

P.O. Box 39, Annandale, VA 22003  
1-703-354-2140 ♦ [www.purpleheart.org](http://www.purpleheart.org)

### **Non Commissioned Officers Association**

9330 Corporate Drive, Suite 701, Selma, TX 78154  
1-703-549-0311 ♦ [www.ncoausa.org](http://www.ncoausa.org)

### **Paralyzed Veterans of America**

801 18th St., NW, Washington, DC 20006  
1-800-424-8200 ♦ [www.pva.org](http://www.pva.org)

### **Veterans of Foreign Wars**

Nat'l Headquarters, 406 W. 34th St., Kansas City, MO 64111  
1-816-756-3390 ♦ [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org)

### **Vietnam Veterans of America**

8719 Colesville Road, Suite 100, Silver Spring, MD 20910  
1-301-585-4000 ♦ [www.vva.org](http://www.vva.org)

## **Seeking Benefits on Your Own**

Although we encourage you to seek the aid of a service representative, you may choose to apply for VA benefits on your own. Write the VA Regional Office (VARO) in your state, or apply for disability, pension, education, vocational rehabilitation and employment benefits online at [www.va.gov/onlineapps.htm](http://www.va.gov/onlineapps.htm).

Below are brief descriptions of forms you'll need to file for certain VA benefits. Be sure to use a return address where mail will get to you as quickly as possible. Make photocopies of all forms for your records before sending your packet to the nearest VARO.

- **Military and Medical Records**  
You will need your military discharge document (DD214) when applying for any benefits. Standard Form 180 (SF-180) is used to get copies of your military and medical records. Veterans may also complete a request online at [www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records](http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records).
- **Application for Compensation and/or Pension**  
VA Form 21-526 must be filed to apply for compensation or pension. This form, along with your DD214 and the following forms, should be mailed directly to the VARO nearest your release destination 30 to 45 days before your release.

- **Statement in Support of Claim**  
VA Form 21-4138 lets you explain why you deserve the benefits you are asking for because of your disability or disorder. It is best to have an experienced service representative help you complete the form.
- **Authorization and Consent to Release Information**  
If you have received medical or mental health care from anyone other than a VA Medical Center and feel it may be relevant to your claim, you need to fill out VA Form 21-4142, which allows your medical records to be released to the VA.
- **Enrollment for Medical Benefits**  
VA Form 10-10EZ is used by the VA to determine if you can receive medical benefits. Complete the form and bring it with you to the VA medical facility where you will seek evaluation for treatment.
- **Vocational Rehabilitation for Disabled Veterans**  
VA Form 28-1900 is needed to apply for the vocational rehabilitation program to help veterans who were disabled during their service reach maximum independence in daily living, learn the skills needed to get a job, and find and keep a job. Send Form 28-1900 to the VARO in your area 10 to 15 days before your release.
- **Request for and Consent to Release of Information from Claimant's Records**  
VA Form VA-3288 is used to get records relevant to your claim from VA facilities (regional offices, Medical Centers, outpatient clinics and Vet Centers). Request a fee waiver under title 38 CFR Sec. 1.526 (i)(2), which requires the VARO to provide a veteran with one set of his or her records free of charge.

## SECTION IV REPLACING PERSONAL RECORDS

There are certain personal records you must have to rent a place to live, apply for employment, open a bank account or request assistance from government agencies and community-based organizations. The following are ones you will need.

- **Photo ID** – Contact the Homeless Veteran Program Coordinator at the nearest VA Medical Center for information on how to obtain a photo ID. State Motor Vehicle Departments provide photo ID services for a fee.
- **DD214** – Homeless veterans are entitled to one copy of their service and medical records free of charge. Send requests to National Personnel Records Center, Military Personnel Records, 1 Archives Drive, St. Louis, MO 63138.

Homeless veterans, through their DVOP/LVER or case manager, may fax the request for records to 314-801-9195. Be sure to write “Homeless veteran case” clearly on the form.

The National Archives and Records Administration stores military personnel files. To submit a request, visit [www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records](http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records).

State Offices of Veterans Affairs often have military records of veterans who are state residents. Go to [www.nasdva.net](http://www.nasdva.net) for contact information in your state.

- **Birth Certificate** – Contact the appropriate office of the state government in your state of birth.
- **Social Security Card** – Apply at the nearest Social Security office (check the blue pages of your local phone book under “U.S. Government, Social Security Administration,” or call 1-800-772-1213). Because of tightened security at some federal buildings, check with your local office to see if there are special procedures you must follow to apply. You may also apply for a replacement card online at [www.ssa.gov/replace\\_sscard.html](http://www.ssa.gov/replace_sscard.html).

## SECTION V REINTEGRATION OF EX-OFFENDERS - ADULT PROGRAM

The Reintegration of Ex-Offenders - Adult Program (RExO) provides grants to local government agencies and community and faith-based organizations that provide employment preparation and job placement services to men and women who are transitioning out of corrections and back into society.

These current and former grantees work closely with homeless service providers and supportive services networks. Although they are not designed to serve only veterans, they are a valuable referral resource for organizations and programs that help veterans in their service areas.

*For more information about RExO, go to [www.doleta.gov/PRI/](http://www.doleta.gov/PRI/).*

### Alabama

The Dannon Project  
1600 20th Street South, Suite B  
Birmingham, AL 35205  
205-202-4072

### Arizona

Arizona Women’s Education &  
Employment Inc. (AWEE)  
640 North 1st Avenue  
Phoenix, AZ 85003  
602-223-4333

### California

Friends Outside in Los Angeles, Inc.  
464 East Walnut Street  
Pasadena, CA 91101  
626-795-7607

### Florida

OIC of Broward County, Inc.  
3407 NW 9th Avenue, Suite 100  
Oakland Park, FL 33309  
954-563-3535

### Iowa

Spectrum Resources  
1700 Keosauqua Way  
Des Moines, IA 50314  
515-288-1248

### Illinois

Tri-County Urban League  
317 South MacArthur Highway  
Peoria, IL 61605  
309-673-7474

**Indiana**

Centerstone of Indiana, Inc.  
720 North Marr  
Columbus, IN 47201  
812-348-7449

**Louisiana**

Goodwill Industries of Southeastern  
Louisiana  
3400 Tulane Avenue, Suite 1000  
New Orleans, LA 70119  
504-456-2622

**Massachusetts**

Span, Inc.  
105 Chauncy Street , Sixth Floor  
Boston, MA 02111  
617-423-0750

**Maryland**

Living Classrooms Foundation  
1417 Thames Street  
Baltimore, MD 21231  
410-685-0295

**Missouri**

Catholic Charities of Kansas City-  
St. Joseph, Inc.  
20 West 9th Street  
Kansas City, MO 64105  
816-221-4377

**New York**

The Fortune Society, Inc.  
29-76 Northern Boulevard  
Long Island City, NY 11101  
212-691-7554

**Oklahoma**

Community Service Council of  
Greater Tulsa  
16 East 16th Street, Suite 202  
Tulsa, OK 74119  
918-585-5551

**Pennsylvania**

Impact Services Corporation  
1952 East Allegheny Avenue  
Philadelphia, PA 19134  
215-739-1600

**South Carolina**

Goodwill Industries of  
Upstate/Midlands South Carolina,  
Inc.  
115 Haywood Road  
Greenville, SC 29607  
864-351-0100

**Texas**

SER-Jobs for Progress of the Texas  
Gulf Coast, Inc.  
201 Broadway Street  
Houston, TX 77012  
713-773-6000

**Washington**

SNAP Financial Access  
3102 West Fort George Wright  
Spokane, WA 99224  
509-456-7111

**Wisconsin**

Word of Hope Ministries, Inc.  
2677 North 40th Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53210  
414-447-1967

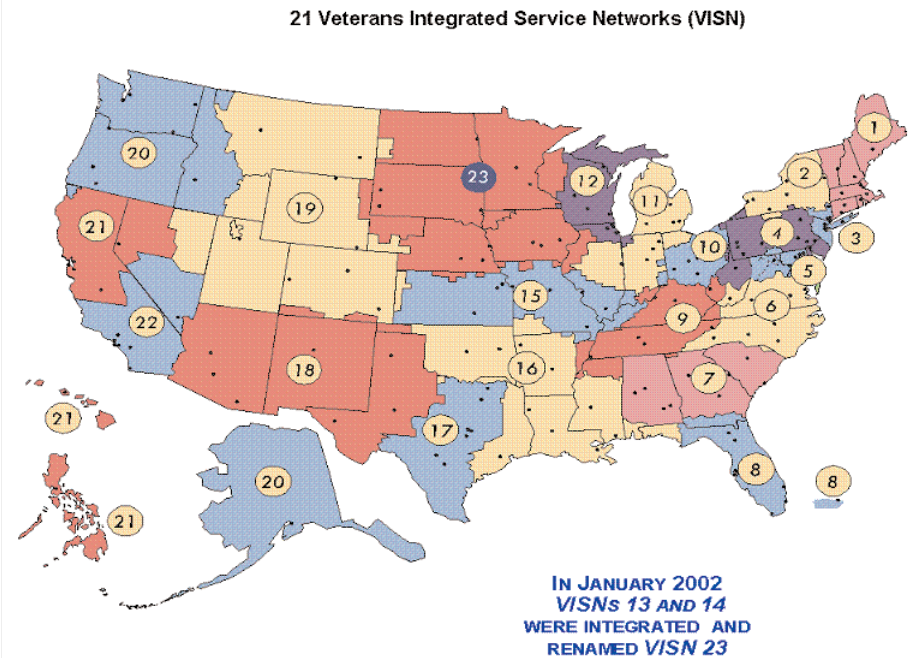
## SECTION VI DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS INCARCERATED VETERAN RE-ENTRY SPECIALISTS

The VA medical system is organized into 21 geographic networks known as Veterans Integrated Service Networks, or VISNs. The Veterans Health Administration has allocated Health Care for Re-Entry Veterans Specialists, who are the VA regional points of contact providing outreach and assessment services to incarcerated veterans, to each VISN.

Network	Name of Specialists	Email Address
VISN 1	James Hart	James.hart2@va.gov
	Thom Baker	Thom.baker@va.gov
	James Gavin	James.gavin@va.gov
VISN 2	Cynthia Thayer	Cynthia.thayer2@va.gov
	Jonathan Pollack	Jonathan.pollack@va.gov
VISN 3	Valerie Johnson	Valerie.johnson2@va.gov
VISN 4	Edward Sesack	Edward.sesack@va.gov
	Ebony McDonald	Ebony.mcdonald@va.gov
VISN 5	Rodney Carter	Rodney.carter2@va.gov
	David Gowers	David.gowers@va.gov
	James Haskell	James.haskell@va.gov
VISN 6	James Temple	James.temple2@va.gov
VISN 7	Harell Jamison	Harell.jamison@va.gov
	Varanese Cousan	Varanese.Cousan@va.gov
VISN 8	Marla Brundies	Marla.brundies@va.gov
	Paula Ambroso	Paula.ambroso@va.gov
	Taylor Savage	Taylor.savage@va.gov
VISN 9	Janis Durham	Janis.durham@va.gov
	Kathy Vasquez	Kathy.vasquez2@va.gov
	Virginia Spini	Virginia.spini@va.gov

Network	Name of Specialists	Email Address
VISN 10	Mya Jenkins Paul Payiatis	Mya.jenkins@va.gov Paul.payiatis@va.gov
VISN 11	Elvin Barren Sarah Neidlinger	Elvin.barren2@va.gov Sarah.souter1@va.gov
VISN 12	David Kagabitang Therese Lynch	David.kagabitang@va.gov Therese.lynch@va.gov
VISN 15	Christine Strohm Rolando Vazquez	Christine.strohm99@va.gov Rolando.vazquez@va.gov
VISN 16	David Sands Lisa Webb Terrance Skidmore Tony Kirksey	Sands.Davidh@va.gov Lisa.webb1@va.gov Terrance.skidmore@va.gov Anthony.kirksey2@va.gov
VISN 17	Warren Pearson	Warren.Pearson@va.gov
VISN 18	John Kehoe Susann Adams	John.kehoe@va.gov Susann.adams@va.gov
VISN 19	Jeri Anderson Michael Ott Kristen Hamilton	Jeri.anderson2@va.gov Michael.ott@va.gov Kristen.hamilton@va.gov
VISN 20	Jeremiah Newbold Diana Rogers	Jeremiah.newbold@va.gov Diana.rogers2@va.gov
VISN 21	George Kennedy	George.kennedy@va.gov
VISN 22	Craig Lea Rodney Bowling	Craig.lea@va.gov Rodney.bowling@va.gov
VISN 23	Clanci Barnhart Ariana Hart Brian Brooks Rebecca Hess	Clanci.barnhart@va.gov Ariana.hart@va.gov Brian.brooks@va.gov Rebecca.hess@va.gov

If you need to find which VISN you are in, look at the map below and contact the appropriate Re-Entry Specialist:



**SECTION VII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF LABOR VETERANS’**  
**EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE**  
**INCARCERATED VETERANS TRANSITION**  
**PROGRAM**

The Department of Labor Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) operates the Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program (IVTP), a grant program focused on assisting incarcerated or transitioning veterans. Grantees provide referral and career counseling services, including: job training and placement assistance; job readiness and life skills support services; housing; health care; and other benefits.

**Alabama**

Alethia House  
 700 37th Street South  
 Birmingham, AL  
 205-324-6502

**Arizona**

Arizona Women’s Education &  
 Employment  
 640 N. 1st Avenue  
 Phoenix, AZ 85003  
 602-223-4333

U.S. VETS - Phoenix site  
 804 E. Jones Avenue  
 Phoenix, AZ 85040  
 602-305-8585

**California**

Volunteers of America Los Angeles  
 544 South San Pedro  
 Los Angeles, CA 90013  
 213-622-3540

Swords to Plowshares  
 1060 Howard Street  
 San Francisco, CA 94103  
 415-252-4788

**Connecticut**

The WorkPlace, Inc.  
 350 Fairfield Drive  
 Bridgeport, CT 06604  
 203-610-8530

**Maryland**

Way Station, Inc.  
 230 West Patrick Street  
 Frederick, MD 21701  
 301-662-3502

**Massachusetts**

Soldier On  
 360 West Housatonic Street  
 Pittsfield, MA 01201  
 413-236-5644

**Michigan**

Eaglevision Ministries, Inc.  
 814 N. Washington  
 Lansing, MI 48906  
 517-574-5643

**Nevada**

U.S. VETS - Las Vegas site  
 525 East Bonanza Road  
 Las Vegas, NV 89101  
 702-366-0456

**Pennsylvania**

Impact Services Corp.  
 1952 E. Allegheny Avenue  
 Philadelphia, PA 19134  
 215-739-5763

Philadelphia Veteran Multi-Service  
 & Education Center  
 213-217 N. 4th Street  
 Philadelphia, PA 19106  
 215-923-8387

**Texas**

Goodwill Industries of Houston  
 4640 Main Street  
 Houston, TX 77002  
 713-699-6351

**Washington**

Goodwill Industries of the Inland  
 Northwest  
 100 Mullan Road  
 Spokane, WA 99206  
 509-444-4303

**Wisconsin**

Center for Veterans Issues  
 315 W. Court Street  
 Milwaukee, WI 53212  
 414-342-4284

## Checklists

## Notes

### Using This Guide

- Ask about classes or resources to help you plan for your release.
- Make a list of your needs.
- Make a list of who may be able to help you.
- Write letters and/or contact organizations by phone or email.
- Write down the steps you take so that you do not repeat them.

### Help for Veterans

- Know where to call toll-free for help.
- Contact organizations about what services they have to offer.
- Think about your housing needs and gather information about what is available locally.
- Learn about job resources and create a plan to find a job.
- Learn about health issues and what services are available.
- Learn about the resources available for substance abuse and mental health treatment in your area.
- Learn about your options to get financial help.
- Begin to take care of other legal issues.
- Learn about resources for women veterans.

### Seeking Federal Benefits

- If you are not currently receiving benefits, find out if you can or should be.
- If you are receiving benefits, notify the VA when you go to prison to avoid an overpayment.
- Contact a veteran service representative to represent you and help you file a claim.
- Apply for apportionment so that some of the money withheld may be given to eligible family members.

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**333 ½ Pennsylvania Ave., SE  
Washington, DC 20003-1148  
202-546-1969 Fax: 202-546-2063  
Toll-free: 1-800-VET-HELP  
Fax: 888-233-8582  
Email: [info@nchv.org](mailto:info@nchv.org)  
Website: [www.nchv.org](http://www.nchv.org)**