

# **Planning for Your Release**

**A Guide for Incarcerated Veterans**



**NATIONAL  
COALITION  
*for*  
HOMELESS  
VETERANS**

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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.



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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 with 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-TALK (press “1”)
  - ◆ 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)
- **National Suicide Support Number**  
1-800-784-2433 (1-800-SUICIDE)

### 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 transportation tokens, emergency shelter and more. You may need to contact several agencies to find all the services you need. Services pro-

vided 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 on their websites. These guides include local resources with contact information for VA facilities in your state, as well as community-based organizations offering housing, employment and healthcare. To view the guide for your state, visit [www1.va.gov/homeless/page.cfm?pg=39](http://www1.va.gov/homeless/page.cfm?pg=39).
- **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).

### *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 “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 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 “Health Care” then “Locations.”

#### *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 [www.dol.gov/vets/aboutvets/contacts/main.htm](http://www.dol.gov/vets/aboutvets/contacts/main.htm).

■ 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, remedial education, 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 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 to those who have an employment handicap. 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 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.

#### *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.

## **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.

### *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.

■ **National Health Care for the Homeless Council** has a list of health care providers working with homeless people. For a list of providers in your state, go to [www.nhchc.org/HCHdirectory.html](http://www.nhchc.org/HCHdirectory.html).

■ **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.

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

- The Department of Health and Human Services **Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Routing Service** can refer you to local programs. Call 1-800-662-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-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 17) 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 2008 was about \$101 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/fsp/contact\\_info/hotlines.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/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**

*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 15).

*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 problem 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 [www.rin.lsc.gov/rinboard/rguide/pdir1.htm](http://www.rin.lsc.gov/rinboard/rguide/pdir1.htm).
- **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 poor 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).

## **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, or find a list of VA-recognized VSOs online at [www1.va.gov/vso/index.cfm](http://www1.va.gov/vso/index.cfm).

#### **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**

5413-A, B & C Backlick Rd., Springfield, VA 22151  
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**

8605 Cameron St., Suite 400, 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 (DD 214) 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/evetrecs/index.html](http://www.archives.gov/veterans/evetrecs/index.html).

#### ■ **Application for Compensation and/or Pension**

VA Form 21-526 must be filed to apply for compensation or pension. This form, along with your DD 214 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.
- **DD 214** – 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, 9700 Page Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63132-5100.

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 THE PRESIDENT’S PRISONER RE-ENTRY INITIATIVE

The President’s Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative 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 the Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative, go to [www.doleta.gov/PRI/](http://www.doleta.gov/PRI/).*

### Alaska

The Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc.  
Anchorage, AK  
(907) 793-3300

### Arizona

Arizona Women’s Education  
and Employment, Inc.  
Phoenix, AZ  
(602) 223-4333

Community Intervention Associates  
Yuma, AZ  
(928) 376-0026

The Primavera Foundation, Inc.  
Tucson, AZ  
(520) 882-9668

### California

Allen Temple Housing and  
Economic Development Corp.  
Oakland, CA  
(510) 567-1490

Fresno Career Development  
Institute, Inc.  
Fresno, CA  
(559) 498-7155

Metro United Methodist Urban  
Ministry  
San Diego, CA  
(619) 236-9922

Mexican American  
Alcoholism Program, Inc.  
Sacramento, CA  
(916) 394-2320

The Second Chance Program of San Diego  
San Diego, CA  
(619) 239-1003

### **Colorado**

The Bo Matthews Center  
Denver, CO  
(720) 865-2334

The Empowerment Program  
Denver, CO  
(303) 320-1989 x211

### **Connecticut**

Community Partners in Action, Inc.  
Hartford, CT  
(860) 566-2030

### **District of Columbia**

Healthy Families/Thriving Communities Collaborative Council, Inc.  
Washington, DC  
(202) 299-0900

### **Florida**

OIC of Broward County, Inc.  
Ft. Lauderdale, FL  
(954) 535-2178

Operation New Hope, Inc.  
Jacksonville, FL  
(904) 425-6002

### **Hawaii**

Maui Economic Opportunity, Inc.  
Wailuku, HI  
(808) 249-2990 x232

### **Iowa**

The Directors Council  
Des Moines, IA  
(515) 697-5742

Spectrum Resources  
Des Moines, IA  
(515) 288-1248

### **Illinois**

The Safer Foundation  
Chicago, IL  
(312) 431-7661

### **Kansas**

KANSEL  
Wichita, KS  
(316) 263-9620

### **Louisiana**

The Church United for Community Development  
Baton Rouge, LA  
(225) 753-2273 x264

Odyssey House Louisiana, Inc.  
New Orleans, LA  
(504) 799-5932

### **Maine**

Midcoast Maine Community Action  
Bath, ME  
(207) 882-7552

### **Massachusetts**

Span, Inc.  
Boston, MA  
(617) 423-0750

### **Maryland**

Episcopal Community Services of Maryland  
Baltimore, MD  
(410) 522-3293

### **Michigan**

Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries  
Detroit, MI  
(313) 993-4700

Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency  
Pontiac, MI  
(248) 451-1770

### **Minnesota**

Goodwill/Easter Seals  
St. Paul, MN  
(651) 379-5871

### **Missouri**

Connections to Success  
Kansas City, MO  
(314) 333-4496

St. Patrick Center  
St. Louis, MO  
(314) 802-1953

### **Nevada**

Las Vegas-Clark County Urban League  
Las Vegas, NV  
(702) 636-3949

### **New Jersey**

Career Opportunity Development, Inc.  
Egg Harbor City, NJ  
(609) 965-6871

Pilgrimage Outreach, Inc.  
Paterson, NJ  
(973) 389-2165

### **New York**

The Doe Fund, Inc.  
Brooklyn, NY  
(212) 628-5207

Goodwill Industries of Greater NY and Northern NJ, Inc.  
Astoria, NY  
(973) 481-2300

Urban Youth Alliance International, Inc.  
Bronx, NY  
(718) 402-6872

### **North Carolina**

Center for Community Transitions  
Charlotte, NC  
(704) 374-0762

### **Ohio**

Talbert House  
Cincinnati, OH  
(513) 961-3292

### **Oregon**

SE Works, Inc.  
Portland, OR  
(503) 772-2302

**Pennsylvania**

Connection Training Services  
Philadelphia, PA  
(215) 430-0381

Pennsylvania Department of  
Corrections  
Camp Hill, PA  
(717) 975-4859

**Rhode Island**

Rhode Island Department of  
Corrections  
Cranston, RI  
(401) 462-1000

**Tennessee**

Memphis Leadership Foundation  
Memphis, TN  
(901) 725-3107

**Texas**

Goodwill Industries of  
San Antonio  
San Antonio, TX  
(210) 924-8581

Urban League of Greater Dallas  
and North Central Texas  
Dallas, TX  
(214) 915-4682

WABC Central City Comprehen-  
sive Community Center  
Houston, TX  
(713) 579-2728

**Virginia**

Offender Aid and Restoration of  
Richmond  
Richmond, VA  
(804) 643-2746

**Washington**

People of Color Against AIDS  
Network  
Seattle, WA  
(206) 322-7061 x144

**Wisconsin**

Word of Hope Ministries, Inc.  
Milwaukee, WI  
(414) 447-1965

Zimmerman Consulting  
Racine, WI  
(262) 632-1780

**Wyoming**

Wisconsin Department of  
Corrections  
Cheyenne, WY  
(307) 777-7208

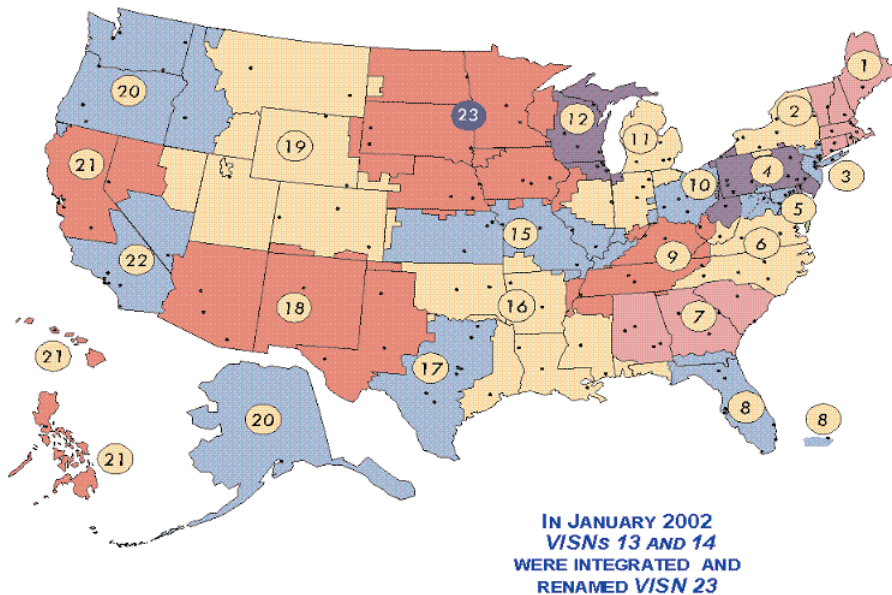
**SECTION VI**  
**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
**INCARCERATED VETERAN**  
**RE-ENTRY SPECIALISTS**

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 and also provide outreach and assessment services to incarcerated veterans, to each VISN.

| <b>Network</b> | <b>Name of Specialist</b> | <b>Email Address</b>     |
|----------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| VISN 1         | Kevin Casey               | kevin.casey2@va.gov      |
| VISN 2         | Jonathan Pollack          | jonathan.pollack@va.gov  |
| VISN 3         | Susan Moore-Magee         | susan.moore-magee@va.gov |
| VISN 4         | Otis Nash                 | otis.nash@va.gov         |
| VISN 5         | Rodney Carter             | rodney.carter2@va.gov    |
| VISN 6         | James Temple              | james.temple2@va.gov     |
| VISN 7         | Varanese Cousan           | varanese.cousan@va.gov   |
| VISN 8         | Taylor Savage             | taylor.savage@va.gov     |
| VISN 9         | Suzanne Jenkins           | suzanne.jenkins@va.gov   |
| VISN 10        | David Shawlson            | david.shawlson@va.gov    |
| VISN 11        | Elvin Barren              | elvin.barren2@va.gov     |
| VISN 12        | David Kagabitang          | david.kagabitang@va.gov  |
| VISN 15        | Rolando Vazquez           | rolando.vazquez@va.gov   |
| VISN 16        | Kyle Liotta               | felton.liotta@va.gov     |
| VISN 17        | Eileen Callejas           | eileen.callejas@va.gov   |
| VISN 18        | Danica Bogicevic          | danica.bogicevic@va.gov  |
| VISN 19        | Michael Apgar             | michael.apgar@va.gov     |
| VISN 20        | Diana Rogers              | diana.rogers2@va.gov     |
| VISN 21        | George Kennedy            | george.kennedy@va.gov    |
| VISN 22        | Virginia Hines            | virginia.hines@va.gov    |
| VISN 23        | Sam Adams                 | sam.adams@va.gov         |

If you need to find which VISN you are in, look at the map below and contact the appropriate re-entry specialist:

21 Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISN)



## Checklists

### 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.







**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)**