



**GUIDEBOOK FOR  
WEST VIRGINIA'S  
INCARCERATED  
VETERANS**

**FEBRUARY 2008**

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## Introduction

This Guidebook is intended to provide current information to assist incarcerated veterans in West Virginia to access benefits through the Department of Veterans Affairs. Information on housing, treatment for substance abuse, mental health, medical, employment, and more can be found in this booklet. Preparing for re-entry is a process, so it is recommended that the veteran begin immediately to gather documentation and information to assist in planning for a successful transition from prison to the community. To help the veteran develop a re-entry plan, important information such as points of contact, phone numbers, addresses, and web sites is included.

We would like to recognize and thank:

The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, which provided basic concepts and core information for this Guide through its "Planning for Your Release" Guide funded by the U. S. Department of Labor; The Veterans Incarcerated Workgroup of Walla Walla, Washington, for the concept of state-specific information in its "Guidebook for Incarcerated Veterans" and for allowing the use of its Guide as a template for this publication;

Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc., for developing the first incarcerated veterans guidebook, which has inspired and informed subsequent efforts; and, Public domain and agency resources included in this Guidebook.

Agency staff names and addresses, phone numbers and website addresses change. If you attempt to contact one of the resources in this Guidebook and the contact information is incorrect, do your best to obtain the correct contact information through a phone call or a Google web search. If you discover any incorrect information in this Guidebook, please send the correct information to:

Otis R. Nash (600)  
VISN 4 Incarcerated Veterans Re-entry Specialist  
Lebanon VA Medical Center  
1700 South Lincoln Avenue  
Lebanon, PA 17042

**Last date revised: February 4, 2008**

## **SECTION 1: HOW TO USE THE GUIDE**

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 web sites that you can use to find out about programs and other help available after your release. Because you may not have phone or internet access, you will need to get assistance from your assigned counselor or ask a friend or family member to help you find the information you need. 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.

While incarcerated, find out which unit in your facility can help you plan for your release (often the education or transfer unit). Take advantage of the many classes that are offered to work on your skills development and prepare yourself for life after release. You don't want to be at risk of homelessness at release, 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 services? Do I need to learn a job skill? Do I have any other legal issues, such as child support? How do I restart my VA checks or Supplemental Security Income (SSI)?

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:

- I need a place to live
- I need a job
- I need access to benefits
- I need work clothes and tools
- I need medical care
- I want mental health and or substance use treatment
- I owe child support or have other legal problems

Think about your list as you read 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 and state 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 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 many organizations are staffed by volunteers who are eager to help, but may not have the answers you are looking for. If someone cannot help you, ask if they know 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. If computer access is not available at your facility, you can visit the public library after release.

Success depends upon you working with the system. That means cooperating with the Department of Corrections (DOC) counseling staff, your parole agent or probation officer, and other agency staff to whom you might be referred. This resource book will not help you unless you make an effort to work in a positive manner with the staff of various agencies and community-based organizations to which you are referred.

## **SECTION 2: ELIGIBILITY AND SERVICES**

### **VA ELIGIBILITY**

To determine eligibility for VA health care, contact the Health Benefits Service Center at 1-877-222-8387. For VA benefits eligibility, contact a VA benefits office at 1-800-827-1000 from any location in the United States.

Eligibility for most VA benefits is based upon discharge from active military service under other than dishonorable conditions. Active service means full-time service as a member of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard.

Honorable and general discharges qualify a veteran for most VA benefits. Dishonorable and bad conduct discharges issued by general court-martial may bar VA benefits. Veterans in prison and parolees may be eligible for certain VA benefits. VA regional offices can clarify the eligibility of prisoners, parolees and individuals with multiple discharges issued under differing conditions. VA benefits will not be provided to any veteran or dependent wanted for an outstanding felony warrant.

Those seeking a VA benefit for the first time must submit a copy of their service discharge form (DD-214, DD-215, or for WWII veterans, a WD form), which documents service dates and type of discharge, or give their full name, military service number, branch and dates of service.

To apply for services veterans must complete a VA Form 10-10EZ, Application for Health Benefits. The form may be obtained from any VA health care facility or regional benefits office, or by calling the VA Health Benefits Service Center toll-free at 1-877-222-VETS (8387). It is also available on the internet at <http://www.va.gov/1010ez.htm>. Veterans may complete the form in person at a VA health care facility, or at home and mail it to a local VA health care facility for processing. Once enrolled, a veteran is eligible to receive services at VA facilities anywhere in the country. Additional information can be found on the VA web site <http://www.va.gov/elig/>.

### **SEEKING FEDERAL BENEFITS**

The Department of Veterans Affairs 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 the VA Regional Office (VARO) to request a copy. This handbook contains important information, phone numbers and explanations regarding benefits. The VA Federal Benefits booklet and other VA information are available at <http://www.va.gov/>.

VA Regional Office and Insurance Center  
640 Fourth Avenue  
Huntington, WV 25701  
1-800-827-1000

VA Regional Office and Insurance Center  
1000 Liberty Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222  
1-800-827-1000  
(counties served: Brooke, Hancock, Marshall, Ohio)

### **ELIGIBILITY FOR VA BENEFITS DURING INCARCERATION**

Veterans incarcerated and incarcerated dependents may apply for the same compensation, dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) – service connected death benefits – and pension benefits as veterans who are not incarcerated. However, Congress has greatly restricted the amount of benefits that may be paid to a veteran or dependent while he or she is incarcerated. These benefits are institutionalized as part of law: 38 U.S.C Sec 5313 (a), 38 C.F.R., Sec.3.665 (a), (d), which reads as follows:

*If a veteran is incarcerated as the result of a “felony” conviction as defined by law: “Any offense punishable by death or imprisonment for a term exceeding one year, unless specifically categorized as a misdemeanor under the law of the prosecuting jurisdiction,” then, the amount paid to a veteran incarcerated for a service-connected disability is generally limited by law to the 10 percent disability rate, or half the amount of the ten percent rate if the veteran’s disability rating is 10 percent. (If the veteran is rated before incarceration as 20 percent disabled or higher, he will receive only the amount payable to a 10 percent disabled veteran.) Incarcerated DIC recipients will receive one-half the amount paid to a veteran receiving compensation payments for a 10 percent-rated disability. A veteran may not receive non-service connected VA pension benefits, or any portion of these benefits, while incarcerated for a felony. However, his family may receive an apportionment of such benefits under the procedure described above. (See 38 C.F.R. Sec.3.666).*

One important requirement for eligibility for VA benefits is that the veteran has to have been issued either an honorable or general discharge, or would have received one if not for reenlisting. If a veteran had two periods of service, one honorable and the other less than honorable, he may still be eligible for VA benefits based on the honorable period of service. 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 or go to <http://www.visn4.va.gov/> to find the medical center nearest you.

## **BENEFIT PAYMENTS WHILE INCARCERATED**

VA benefits are affected if a beneficiary is convicted of a felony and imprisoned for more than 60 days.

Disability or Death Pension paid to an incarcerated beneficiary must be discontinued. Disability compensation paid to an incarcerated veteran rated 20 percent or more disabled is limited to the 10 percent rate. For a surviving spouse, child, or dependent parent receiving Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, or a veteran whose disability rating is 10 percent, the payment is reduced to half of the rate payable to a veteran evaluated as 10 percent disabled.

Any amounts not paid may be apportioned to eligible dependents. Payments are not reduced for participants in work release programs, residing in halfway houses, or under community control.

Failure to notify VA of a veteran’s incarceration can result in overpayment of benefits and subsequent loss of all VA financial benefits until the overpayment is recovered. VA benefits will not be provided to any veteran or dependent wanted for an outstanding felony warrant. Persons convicted of a federal or state capital crime are barred from receiving VA burial benefits.

## **APPORTIONMENT**

Legally, the veteran can only receive a portion of the full amount payable for his or her disability rating, the remaining balance may be apportioned to the individual’s dependent family. To apply for apportionment, send a letter to the VA Regional Office (VARO) that has jurisdiction over the veteran’s case. VA regulations clearly specify this apportionment amount will only go to family members if they can show financial need for such amount. This applies to the spouse, children, or dependent parents who are involved in the application. In deciding whether any apportionment is appropriate, the amount of the apportionment, and to whom it will go, the following factors are considered:

- The family member’s income and living expenses;
- The amount of compensation available to be apportioned;
- The needs and living expenses of other family members; and
- Special needs of any of the family members.

For example: a veteran incarcerated rated as 80 percent disabled can only receive the amount he or she would get if he or she were 10 percent disabled. However, his or her family may be apportioned up to 70 percent, the difference of the 80 percent rating. (DIC may also be apportioned with similar restrictions.)

There is a 60-day “grace period” following conviction where the veteran, or DIC recipient, may still receive full benefits. If the veteran continues to receive benefits after the 60-day period, it will result in an “over-payment”. The VA considers it to be the recipient’s responsibility and fault if this occurs because the recipient failed to notify the VA of his or her incarceration. Attempts to obtain a waiver in these situations of overpayment are often unsuccessful. As a rule, the veteran loses most, if not all, financial benefits until the entire overpayment is recovered by the VA. It has also been a standard procedure that the family will not be entitled to receive an apportionment until the debt is completely recovered.

For more information concerning VA debt collection rules that may affect the veteran incarcerated, telephone: 1-800-827-1000 and request a Veterans Service Organization representative or, write to a Veterans Service Organization (attention SR list). It is important that each disabled veteran receiving compensation or DIC payments promptly notify the VARO. Regular full benefit payments should begin upon release, providing the VA is notified of the veteran’s release, including placement within a community treatment center or halfway house in the community, within one year of release. One other relevant restriction on veteran’s incarcerated eligibility for service connected disability compensation is that “No total disability rating based on unemployability, may be assigned to an incarcerated veteran.”

It is important to remember that most VA decisions, including those on apportionment, can be appealed to the Board of Veterans Appeals and, if need be, to the Court of Appeal for Veterans Affairs.

### ***Debt Reduction***

To avoid an overpayment of VA benefits and creation of a debt, beneficiaries must report immediately to VA any change in their status, such as the amount of their income or net worth, the number of dependents, divorce, or withdrawal from school.

All debts must be repaid to VA. VA may assess interest and administrative fees, which will be added to the original amount of the debt until the debt is cleared.

Failure to repay a debt will affect one's credit. Collection of the debt may be turned over to a collection agency, or the debt may be offset by withholding federal income tax refunds or other federal payments, including federal pay and pension.

### **HELP SEEKING BENEFITS**

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

Many veterans **Service Organizations** have trained staff who can help with your VA claim, and can legally represent your claim before the VA. Some also help homeless and at-risk veterans find support services they may need.

**The American Legion – Dept of WV**  
**304-343-7591**

**Veterans of Foreign Wars – Dept of WV**  
**304-768-7514**

**Disabled American Veterans – Dept of WV**  
**304-965-3245**

**Paralyzed Veterans of America**  
**304-925-9352**

**WV Veterans Coalition**  
**304-255-1003**

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 VARO or find the forms at <http://www.va.gov/vaforms>. You can also apply for certain benefits at <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp>.

Below are brief descriptions of **forms needed 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 or records before sending your information to the VARO nearest to you.

The following forms can be found on the internet at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov).

**Standard Form-180 Request Pertaining to Military Records** is used to obtain copies of your Record of Discharge (DD-214), military personnel and medical records. You will need a copy of your DD-214 when applying for any benefits. Requests may also complete online at <http://vetrecs.archives.gov>.

**VA Form 10-10EZ Application for Health Benefits**. The form may be obtained from any VA health care facility or regional benefits office, or by calling the VA Health Benefits Service Center toll-free at 1-877-222-VETS (8387). It is also available online at <http://www.va.gov/1010ez.htm>.

**VA Form 21-526 Application for Compensation or Pension** 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.

**VA Form 21-4138 Statement in Support of Claim** 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.

**VA Form 21-4142 Authorization for Release of Information**. If you have received medical or mental health care that may be relevant to your claim from any provider other than a VA provider, you need to complete a VAF 21-4142 giving permission for release of medical records to the VA.

**VA Form 10-10EZ Enrollment for Medical Benefits** is used by the VA to determine your eligibility to receive medical benefits. Complete the form and bring it with you to the VA medical facility where you will seek evaluation for treatment.

**VA Form 28-1900 Vocational Rehabilitation for Disabled Veterans** is needed to apply for the vocational rehabilitation program to help veterans who were disabled during their service reach maximum independence in daily living, to learn the skills needed to get a job, and to find and keep a job. Send Form 28-1900 to the VARO in your area 10 to 15 days before your release.

**VA Form 70-3288 Request for and Consent to Release of Information from Claimant's Records** 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 section 38 C.F.R. Sec.1.526 (h), which requires the VARO to provide veteran with one set of his or her records free of charge.

## ELIGIBILITY FOR VETERANS HEALTH REGISTRIES

Certain veterans can participate in a VA health registry and receive free medical examinations, including laboratory and other diagnostic tests deemed necessary by an examining clinician. VA maintains health registries to provide special health examinations and health-related information. To participate, contact the nearest VA health care facility or visit <http://www.va.gov/environagents/>.

**Gulf War Registry:** For veterans who served in the Gulf War and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).

**Depleted Uranium Registries:** VA maintains two registries for veterans possibly exposed to depleted uranium. The first is for veterans who served in the Gulf War, including Operation Iraqi Freedom. The second is for veterans who served elsewhere, including Bosnia and Afghanistan.

**Agent Orange Registry:** For veterans possibly exposed to dioxin or other toxic substances in herbicides used during the Vietnam War, while serving in Korea in 1968 or 1969, or as a result of testing, transporting, or spraying herbicides for military purposes.

**Ionizing Radiation Registry:** For veterans possibly exposed to atomic radiation during the following activities: Atmospheric detonation of a nuclear device; occupation of Hiroshima or Nagasaki from August 6, 1945 through July 1, 1946; internment as a prisoner of war in Japan during World War II; serving in official or in Longshot, Milrow or Cannikin underground nuclear tests at Amchitka Island, Alaska, before January 1, 1974; or treatment with nasopharyngeal (NP) radium military duties at the gaseous diffusions plants at Paducah, KY; Portsmouth, OH; or the K-25 area at Oak Ridge, TN for at least 250 days before February 1, 1992, during military service.

## GULF WAR VETERANS

**Gulf War Period:** Beginning August 2, 1990, and ending on a date to be established by Presidential proclamation or by law. Active-duty personnel and reservists called to active duty during this period are eligible for the full range of wartime benefits after 90 days of active duty service.

**Compensation:** Gulf War veterans with an undiagnosed illness of at least six-month duration that manifests itself by Dec. 31, 2006, may be eligible for compensation. VA will compensate Gulf veterans who served anytime from August 1, 1990, through July 31, 1991, in the Southwest Asian theatre of operations of the Gulf War and develop amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's disease).

**Pension Eligibility:** Provides that service in the Gulf satisfies the service requirements for VA pension program, a needs-based benefit for wartime veterans who are not able to work, and for the needy survivors of wartime veterans.

### Veterans Health Benefits:

Three environment referral centers at VA medical centers have been established to treat Gulf War veterans with unusual symptoms possibly related to environmental contaminants.

Readjustment counseling is offered to Operation Desert Storm/Shield veterans.

Gulf War veterans are eligible for one-time treatment of dental conditions after discharge from service if they have 90 days of active duty.

- Veterans Housing Loans:** Provides VA guaranteed home loan eligibility after 90 days for active-duty members and members of the Reserves and National Guard activated in connection with the Gulf War.
- Pension Benefit:** Pension is payable to wartime veterans with limited income and assets who are permanently and totally disabled from non service-connected causes. Veterans age 65 or over need not meet the disability requirement.
- Pension Programs:** Public Law 73-2, Old Law  
Public Law 86-211, Protected Pension, effective June 1, 1960  
  
Public Law 95-588, Improved Pension, effective Jan. 1, 1979  
  
Any application for pension after Jan. 1, 1979, comes under the Improved Pension law

## TRANSITION ASSISTANCE

VA has stationed personnel at major military hospitals to help seriously injured service members returning from OEF and OIF as they transition from military to civilian life, including VA Seamless Transition, Transition Assistance Program, Veterans' Workforce Investment, State Employment Services, Veteran Preference for Federal Jobs, and the Center for Veterans Enterprise. OEF/OIF service members who have questions about VA benefits or need assistance in filing a VA claim or accessing services can contact the nearest VA office or call 1-800-827-1000.

## WOMEN VETERANS

Most VA Medical Centers and Vet Centers have a designated Women Veterans Coordinator to assist women veterans in accessing VA benefit programs and healthcare services. To find the medical center near you, call 1-877-222-8387 or go to <http://www.visn4.va.gov/>.

Many women in prison had similar histories, problems, and personal issues before their arrests and convictions. Mentors with **Women in Community Service (WICS)** help women preparing to leave prison and those who are just getting back into society. WICS' prison programs help women think about their behavior, gain job skills, and build self-esteem. For the Huntington region, contact the U.S. DOL, Job Corps at 1-800-283-9427 or go to [www.wics.org](http://www.wics.org) to find the nearest WICS program.

## 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 in the phone book to contact a local post, or contact the National Headquarters to find the post nearest you.

If you are unemployed with little or no income, you may be able to get **food stamps**. A person may normally qualify for \$85 to \$100 worth of food stamps per month. Call the toll-free information number at 1-800-221-5689, or find a list of food stamp hotlines for each state at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/>. 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. Food Stamps 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 detailed information or assistance, call 1-800-772-1213, call or your local Social Security Administration office listed in the phone book blue pages, or go to: <http://www.ssa.gov/notices/supplemental-security-income/>.

**Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** has a program called Emergency Food and Shelter Program to help prevent homelessness. Contact the 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:*

You should talk to a **Veterans Advocate Service Officer** for help with discharge upgrades, seeking benefits, and filing a VA claim.

*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](http://www.abanet.org).

**Legal Services or Legal Aid offices** have staff lawyers to provide free legal help to poor clients. The lawyers are usually experts in the types of problems that poor clients often have. Look in the yellow pages for a local Legal Aid office or check online for the program nearest you.

**Pine Tree Legal Assistance** has an online list of organizations across the nation that provides free legal help to clients who qualify. 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** to learn if there is a pro-bono program in your community, or go to [www.abanet.org/barserv/stlobar.html](http://www.abanet.org/barserv/stlobar.html).

## **VA LIFE INSURANCE**

For complete details on Service Members' Group Insurance, Traumatic Injury Protection Under Service members' Group Life Insurance, Family Service Members' Group Life Insurance, Veterans' Group Life Insurance, Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance, and Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance visit the VA internet site at <http://www.insurance.va.gov> or call toll-free 1-800-669-8477. Specialists are available between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. Eastern Time, to discuss premium payments, insurance dividends, address changes, policy loans, naming beneficiaries and reporting the death of the insured.

If the insurance policy number is not known, send whatever information is available, such as the veteran's VA file number, date of birth, Social Security number, military serial number or military service branch and dates of service to:

**VA Regional Office and Insurance Center**  
640 Fourth Avenue  
Huntington, WV 25701  
1-800-827-1000

**VA Regional Office and Insurance Center**  
1000 Liberty Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222  
1-800-827-1000  
(counties served: Brooke, Hancock, Marshall, Ohio)

## HOME LOAN GUARANTY

VA home loan guaranties are issued to help eligible service members, veterans, reservists and unmarried surviving spouses obtain homes, condominiums, residential cooperative housing units, and manufactured homes, and to refinance loans. For additional information on VA loan uses, eligibility, guaranty amounts, VA appraisals required before loans are guaranteed by the VA, financing, loan assumption requirements and liability, loans for Native American veterans, and safeguards established to protect veterans, visit <http://www.homeloans.va.gov/>.

## EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE

Finding a job may be hard and can seem overwhelming, but it is possible and very important! While incarcerated, you should ask for vocational counseling and training so you are prepared to go to work when released. Don't wait until you get out to begin thinking about what you will do, start planning now!

## EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The Department of Labor's (DOL) One-Stop Career Centers offer one-stop shopping for your employment and training needs. One-Stop Career Centers offer a variety of job finding resources in one place. Services include:

- Internet access to thousands of job listings in WV and nationwide

- Computerized job matching and direct referral to job opportunities

- Career counseling and job search workshops

- Assistance writing and publicizing your resume

- Assistance accessing training and retraining resources

The One-Stop Career Center is a new approach to the delivery of employment and training services. State, county and local government agencies, community colleges, local non-profits, businesses and labor have joined forces to make it easier to find work, get training or change careers. There are One-Stop Centers and affiliates located throughout West Virginia. A listing of WV centers is available on the web at [www.servicelocator.org](http://www.servicelocator.org).

The VA 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. Contact your VA Regional Office (VARO) at 1800-827-1000, or go to <http://www1.va.gov/directory/Guide/division.asp?dnum=3>.

The VA Veterans Industries and Compensated Work Therapy programs offer structured work opportunities and supervised therapeutic housing for at-risk and homeless veterans with physical, mental health and addiction problems. VA contracts with private industry and the public sector to furnish work opportunities for these veterans, who learn job skills, re-learn successful work habits, and regain a sense of self-esteem. Veterans are paid for their work and given assistance with employment in the community. For further information, go to [www.vetsinfo.com](http://www.vetsinfo.com).

## HOUSING

It is important to know that you have a place to go when released. The first step in returning to the community is finding a place to stay. This section includes ways to locate VA residential and transitional programs. Transitional or temporary housing can serve as a step toward full independence. However, there are often waiting lists for housing assistance programs, so you should ask about applying as soon as possible.

In West Virginia and Pittsburgh, VA Medical Centers have residential rehabilitation and transitional housing programs that can assist with your adjustment to the community. Each program is unique and you will want to contact the homeless coordinator to learn more about admission criteria to either our Homeless Domiciliary Programs or our Grant & Per Diem Programs and other VA Residential Rehabilitation Services. Contact information for the individual homeless coordinators can be found at: <http://www.visn4.va.gov/>.

## SECTION 3: HOW TO CONTACT THE VA

### VA Regional Offices that serve West Virginia residents:

#### VA Regional Office and Insurance Center

640 Fourth Avenue  
Huntington, WV 25701  
1-800-827-1000

#### VA Regional Office and Insurance Center

1000 Liberty Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222  
1-800-827-1000  
(WV counties served: Brooke, Hancock, Marshall, Ohio)

## HEALTH

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

- We encourage you to enroll in the VA Health Benefits System as soon as you are released. Every VA Medical Center has a Health Care for Homeless Veterans Coordinator who helps veterans and their families find resources inside and outside the VA Health Care system. Call 1-877-222-8387 or go to <http://www.visn4.va.gov> to find the medical center nearest you.

### VA Medical Centers in West Virginia

Beckley VA Medical Center  
200 Veterans Avenue  
Beckley, WV 25801  
304-255-2121

Huntington VA Medical Center  
1540 Spring Valley Drive  
Huntington, WV 25704  
304-429-6741

Clarksburg VA Medical Center  
1 Medical Center Drive  
Clarksburg, WV 26301  
304-623-3461  
1-800-733-0512

Martinsburg VA Medical Center  
Route 9  
Martinsburg, WV 25401  
304-263-0811  
1-800-817-3807

## SUBSTANCE ABUSE & MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT

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

Contact the Homeless Veteran Services Coordinator in the local VA Medical or the Vet Center. Call 1-877-222-8387 or go to <http://www.visn4.va.gov> to find the medical center nearest you.

### *If not eligible for veteran's benefits, the following sources may be able to tell you where you can go to get 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.

National Mental Health Association offers support groups, rehabilitation, socialization, and housing services through 340 community organizations located across the country. Call 1-800-969-NMHA or find a local office online at [www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org).

## **VA Community Based Outpatient Clinics**

Charleston  
104 Alex Lane  
Charleston, WV 25304  
304-926-6001

Gassaway  
617 River Street  
Gassaway, WV 26624  
304-264-5654

Franklin  
Pendleton Community Care  
314 Pine Street  
PO Box 100  
Franklin, WV 26807  
304-358-2355

Parkersburg  
912 Market Street  
Parkersburg, WV 26101  
304-422-5114

## **VA Community Based Outpatient Clinics (continued)**

Parsons  
206 Spruce Street  
Parsons, WV 26287  
304-478-2219

Petersburg  
Grant Memorial Hospital  
Route 55 West  
Petersburg, WV 26847  
304-257-1026 Ext 120

Logan  
513 Dingess Street  
Logan, WV 25601  
304-752-8355

Williamson  
75 W. 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Williamson, WV 25661  
304-235-2187

## **Vet Centers**

Vet Centers serve veterans and their families by providing a continuum of quality care, including professional readjustment counseling, community education, outreach to special populations, and the brokering of services with community agencies. They provide a key access link between the veteran and other services in the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs.

Beckley  
1000 Johnstown Road  
Beckley, WV 25801  
304-252-8220/8227  
1-877-859-8111

Martinsburg  
900 Winchester Avenue  
Martinsburg, WV 25401  
304-263-6776  
1-800-406-7871

Charleston  
521 Central Avenue  
Charleston, WV 25302  
304-343-3825  
1-877-859-3111

Morgantown  
1083 Greenbag Road  
Morgantown, WV 26508  
304-291-4303  
1-800-470-6848

Logan Outstation  
21 Main Street West  
Henlawson, WV 25624  
304-752-4453/7269/7094  
1-877-859-6111

Princeton  
905 Mercer Street  
Princeton, WV 24740  
304-425-5653  
1-877-860-9111

Huntington  
3135 16<sup>th</sup> Street RD  
Suite 11  
Huntington, WV 25701  
304-523-8387  
1-877-859-7111

Wheeling  
1206 Chapline Street  
Wheeling, WV 26003  
304-232-0587/0589  
1-800-535-7950

**Vet Centers (continued)**

Parkersburg Outstation  
912 Market Street, Room 201A  
Parkersburg, WV 26101  
304-485-1599/1916  
1-800-591-6001

**National Cemeteries**

Grafton National Cemetery  
431 Walnut Street  
Grafton, WV 26354  
304-265-2044

West Virginia National Cemetery  
Route 2, Box 127  
Grafton, WV 26354  
304-265-2044

## **SECTION 4: STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA DIVISION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

The state of West Virginia offers benefits to veterans. Some of the benefits are listed below. For more information, contact the agency at 304-558-3661, toll free within WV 1-888-838-2332 or on the internet <http://www.wvs.state.wv.us/>.

**HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION FOR CERTAIN ELIGIBLE VETERANS:** Specific information is available through the local County Assessor's Office.

**AGENT ORANGE PROGRAM:** The program administered by the West Virginia Division of Health expired July 1, 1989. However, assistance is provided to Korean and Vietnam veterans exposed to certain chemicals, defoliants or herbicides or other causative agents, including Agent Orange from the US Department of Veterans Affairs, Medicine and Surgery.

**STATE WAR ORPHANS EDUCATION:** Provides for a waiver of tuition and registration fees in a state supported college or university for children between the ages of sixteen and twenty-three whose veteran parent served in World War I, World War II, Korean Conflict, Vietnam Era or any time of conflict as declared by Congress. Parent must have died in such wartime period, or, if subsequent to discharge, death must have been the result of disability incurred in such wartime service.

**FREE HUNTING AND FISHING PRIVILEGES** for 100% service-connected veterans and those veterans in receipt of a VA auto grant.

**FREE LICENSE – AUTOMOBILE:** Provides special vehicle license plates, DV Tags without fee to any veteran in receipt of an auto grant or who is permanently and totally disabled due to service-connected causes, and former POW Tag as certified by the US Department of Veterans Affairs. Also recent legislation provides for Purple Heart Tags for those wounded in action and Pearl Harbor Survivors Tags for West Virginia veterans who were at Pearl Harbor during the attack on December 7, 1941. Veteran Plate for honorably discharged veterans can be purchased for a one-time fee of \$10.00 over and above the regular license fee required by Motor Vehicles.

**STATE VETERANS HOME (DOMICILIARY):** Domiciliary care in Veterans Home is for ambulatory veterans who are able to go to the dining room without help; can dress themselves; can make their own beds, and can participate in an assigned therapeutic activity. A veteran may be charged for care if he is able to pay.

**VETERANS PREFERENCE:** Under the West Virginia Civil Service System all veterans who have served under honorable conditions in the armed forces of the United States during World War II, Korea Conflict, Vietnam Era or during hostile conflict shall have five (5) points added to a final passing score. An additional five (5) points are added to a veteran's score if in receipt of the Purple Heart or has a compensable service-connected disability.

**VETERANS BONUS:** The West Virginia State Legislature approved four separate bonus programs for payment to veterans of World War I and World War II, Korean Conflict, the Vietnam Era and veterans of conflicts in Lebanon, Panama, Granada, and Desert Storm. The deadline for making application for these bonus programs has expired as indicated: World War I and World War II – December 31, 1955; Korean Conflict – June 30, 1959; Vietnam Era – December 31, 1976; Lebanon, Panama, Granada and Desert Storm – June 30, 1994.

**VETERANS RE-EDUCATION ACT FUND:** The West Virginia Legislature provides tuition assistance to those veterans who need a new vocation due to dislocation or unemployment. Veteran must have exhausted the G. I. Bill and be in need of tuition assistance.

### **WEST VIRGINIA VETERANS HOME**

The West Virginia Veterans' Home is located in the village of Barboursville, fifteen miles from downtown

Huntington. Basic eligibility requirements are: Veterans must have been discharged from the service with an honorable discharge or with a general discharge under honorable conditions. Veterans discharged after September 7, 1980 must have served at least 24 consecutive months. The veteran must have been a resident of the State of West Virginia from one year immediately prior to applicant or entered military service from the state. Proof of residency will be required. Due to the health and welfare of residents of the Barboursville Veterans' Home, there are certain pre-admission medical tests which must be completed prior to being admitted to the hospital. All qualified veterans must be ambulatory and independent in all activities of daily living. The home is not a treatment facility and cannot accommodate veterans in need of daily care or skilled assistance. The home provides a nursing department and a contract physician. All medical treatment is provided by the VA Medical Center located in Huntington. Transportation is provided to the medical center three times daily.

Rooms available for occupancy accommodate two, three or four persons. Every effort is made to ensure compatibility between occupants. Female veterans are most welcome and special lodging accommodations are provided. A person's income is not a factor in gaining admission, although residents are required to contribute one-half of his or her monthly income as their maintenance contribution. The home is very liberal in its rules and regulations. Residents may leave on a pass for up to three days by simply signing a daily log sheet. Residents are authorized up to 30 days of furlough per year. Visitation to the home is encouraged and visitors may enjoy a meal with the residents at a nominal fee.

Emphasis is placed on maintaining a warm, attractive and comfortable "Home" for the West Virginia veteran who is in need of a place to live. Assistance with application for residency can be obtained through any of the West Virginia Division of Veterans Affairs Field Offices or call 304-736-1027.

#### **WEST VIRGINIA VETERANS NURSING HOME**

The facility is the first veterans nursing home built in West Virginia and is located on 5.5 acres of land given to the State of West Virginia by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The nursing home is located on the Louis A. Johnson VAMC Clarksburg campus and has 120 beds, with 30 beds designated for Alzheimer patients.

## **Section 5: Community Resources and Services**

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 to find out 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. It is best to start asking about services and requirements now, in order to prepare for your release. You may even ask if your name can be put on a waiting list when you get closer to your release date.

To find a list of emergency shelters for men, women, and families in every state, check the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) at [www.hud.gov/homeless/hmlsagen.cfm](http://www.hud.gov/homeless/hmlsagen.cfm).

In order to assist homeless individuals, counties throughout West Virginia participate in **HUD's Continuum of Care**. Points of contact have been designated to furnish information about homeless resources in various counties, as indicated below:

### **Wheeling/Weirton Area**

Lisa A. Badia  
84 15th Street  
Wheeling, WV 26603  
304-232-6105

### **Charleston, Kanawha, Putnam, Boone, and Clay Counties**

Mindy Young  
515 Elizabeth Street  
Charleston, WV 25311  
304-348-8035

### **Huntington, Cabell, Wayne Counties**

John Mendez  
627 Fourth Avenue  
Huntington, WV 25701  
304-523-2764

### **Balance of the state of West Virginia**

Cynthia Thompson  
306 12<sup>th</sup> Street  
Point Pleasant, WV 25550  
304-675-1124

## **NATIONAL COALITION FOR HOMELESS VETERANS**

### **Cabell-Huntington Coalition for the Homeless**

Donald DeBord  
627 Fourth Avenue  
Huntington, WV 25701  
304-523-2764

### **Greater Wheeling Coalition of the Homeless**

Lisa Badia  
PO Box 406  
Wheeling, WV 26603  
304-232-6105

**Potomac Highlands Support Services**

Ken Dyke  
PO Box 869 – Airport Road  
Petersburg, WV 26847  
304-257-2448

**Listed below are homeless shelters, missions, meal sites, and other social services listed by county:**

**Barbour County**

**Public Inebriated Shelter (also serves Randolph, Tucker, & Upshur Counties)**

102 Main Street  
Elkins, WV 26241  
304-636-8205 (site)  
304-636-3232 (main office)  
304-472-2022 (Buckhannon Office)  
Point of Contact: Linda Mealey

**Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan Counties**

**Community Networks, Inc. (Bethany House)**

P.O. Box 3064  
Martinsburg, WV 25402  
304-263-3510  
304-263-9734 (Fax)  
216 East John Street  
Martinsburg, WV 24501  
Point of Contact: Glenda Helman and/or Bunny Shaw

**Martinsburg Union Rescue Mission, Inc. (also serving Jefferson and Morgan)**

P.O. Box 843  
602 West Main Street  
Martinsburg, WV 25402  
304-263-6901  
Point of Contact: Danny Custer and/or Rev. Rowe

**Shenandoah Women's Center, Inc. (also serves Berkeley, Jefferson and Morgan)**

236 West Martin Street  
Martinsburg, WV 25401  
304-263-8522  
304-263-8559 (Fax)  
Point of Contact: Heather Moses

**Cabell and Wayne Counties**

**Harmony House**

304-523-2764

**Calhoun County**

**Resources and Safe Environments**

P.O. Box 57  
Elizabeth, WV 26143  
304-275-0941

## **Harrison County**

### **A Flame for Christ Ministries**

115 Ventura Drive  
Bridgeport, WV 25330  
Point of Contact: Tressa J. Shaw

### **Almost Home (WVMHCA)**

507 East Pike Street  
Clarksburg, WV 26301  
Point of Contact: Lourence Shingleton

### **Clarksburg Mission (Shelter and Food Pantry)**

312 North 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Clarksburg, WV 26301  
304-622-2451  
304-622-6305 (fax)  
Point of Contact: Sunny Palmer

### **Faith Services**

535 West Main Street  
Clarksburg, WV 26301  
304-326-3248  
304-326-3249 (Fax)  
Point of Contact: Lisa Fornash

### **H.I.S. Bridge Builders**

PO Box 4213  
Clarksburg, WV 26302  
608 Worthington drive  
Bridgeport, WV 26330  
304-669-1787  
Point of Contact: Gwen M. Cornman

### **Open Door (Half-Way House)**

509 Stanley Avenue  
Clarksburg, WV 26301  
Point of Contact: Helen Jones

### **Opportunity House (Half-way House)**

93 East Main Street  
Buckhannon, WV 26505  
304-472-2327  
Point of Contact: Art Turner

### **Susan Dew Hoff Memorial Clinic, Inc.**

PO Box 120  
925 Liberty Ave.  
West Milford, WV 26451  
304-745-3700  
Point of Contact: Sister M. Rebecca Fidler, Director

**The Lord's Food Pantry**

6<sup>th</sup> and Pike Streets  
Clarksburg, WV 26301  
304-624-6536  
Point of Contact: Criss Cross

**Volunteers of America-WV**

Colonial Gateway  
Rt. 2 Box 406  
Suite 125  
Clarksburg, WV 26301  
304-626-3630  
Point of Contact: Mary Conley and/or Bob Moore Program Manager

**Jackson County**

**New Beginnings (Formerly Rhea House)**

338 North Church Street  
Ripley, WV 26271  
304-457-9848  
Point of Contact: Cindy Thompson

**Kanawha County**

**YWCA Sojourner's Shelter for Women, Children, and Families**

304-340-3562

**Roark-Sullivan Center**

304-340-3616

**Marion County**

**Fairmont – Marion County Food Pantry**

107 Jefferson Street  
Fairmont, WV 26554  
304-363-7150  
Point of Contact: Mitchell Weaver

**HOPE, Inc. (Includes Harrison, Doddridge, Lewis and Gilmer)**

P.O. Box 626  
Fairmont, WV 26554  
304-367-1100  
304-367-0362 (Fax)  
Point of Contact: Harriet Sutton

**Scott's Place Homeless Shelter/ NCWCAA (serving all counties in West Virginia)**

215 Scotts place  
Fairmont, WV 26554  
304-366-6543  
304-366-6103 (fax)  
Point of Contact: Kirk Schmidt

**Union Missions of Fairmont, Inc. (Shelter/Food)**

107 Jefferson St.  
Fairmont, WV 26554  
304-363-0300  
363-2722  
Point of Contact: Rev. Bob Thompson

**Marshall County**

Marshall Family Guardian, Inc.  
909 Fifth Street  
PO Box 217  
Moundsville, WV 26041  
304-845-4786

**Mason County**

Southwest Community Action Council  
304-675-1124

**Monongalia County**

**Bartlett House, Inc. (All counties in West Virginia)**

1110 University Avenue  
Morgantown, WV 26507  
304-292-0101  
304-292-0031 (Fax)  
Point of Contact: Keri Demasi

**Caritas House, Inc.**

PO Box 4066  
Morgantown, WV 26504-4066  
1000 Elmer Prince Drive  
Morgantown, WV 26505  
304-598-5111  
Point of Contact: Eric S. Simpson

**Friendship Room, Mental Health America**

364 High Street #224  
Morgantown, WV 26505  
304-292-0525  
Point of Contact: Tina Hammack

**Morgantown Service League**

313 Chestnut Street  
Morgantown, WV 26505  
304-296-7825  
Point of Contact: Kay Bartrug

**Rape and Domestic Violence Information Center, Inc.**

(also serves Pendleton, Pocahontas, Preston, Putnam, and Raleigh)

P.O. Box 4228

Morgantown, WV 26504

304-292-5100

304-292-0204 (Fax)

Point of Contact: Judy King-Smith

**Randolph County**

**Randolph County Homeless Shelter**

938 South Davis Avenue

Elkins, WV 26241

304-636-5193

304-637-4718 (Fax)

Point of Contact: Dave Watson

**Women's Aid in Crisis**

P.O. Box 2062

Elkins, WV 26241

1-800-339-1185

304-636-8433

304-636-5564 (Fax)

Point of Contact: Marsia White

**Wood County**

**Family Crisis Intervention-Emergency Shelter**

P.O. Box 1695

Parkersburg, WV 26102

304-428-2333

304-428-2398 (Fax)

Point of Contact: Judy Ball

**Parkersburg Area Coalition for the Homeless**

619 Market Street

Parkersburg, WV 26101

Point of Contact: Marie Modesitt

**Salvation Army by County**

**Harrison County (also serves Braxton, Doddridge, Gilmer, Lewis and Upshur)**

1010 Chestnut Street

Clarksburg, WV 26301

P.O. Box 366

Clarksburg, WV 26302

304-622-2360

Point of Contact: Sharon Lauder

**Monongalia County (also serves Marion and Preston)**

1264 University Avenue

Morgantown, WV 26504

304-296-3525/2792

Point of Contact: Major Richard Hathorn

## Section 6: Other Useful VA Numbers & Contact Information

### Helpful TOLL - FREE NUMBERS

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

### US Department of Veterans Affairs — [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

Benefits: 1-800-827-1000

Medical Centers: 1-877-222-8387

<http://www.visn4.va.gov/visn4/>

Persian Gulf War Helpline: 1-800-749-8387

**Focus On Recovery Helpline** - A 24-hour national alcohol and drug abuse addiction and treatment hotline: 1-800-888-9383

**National AIDS Hotline** -Talk to someone who knows about HIV/AIDS and can tell you about AIDS services in your city or state: 1-800-822-7422

**National Coalition for Homeless Veterans** — [www.nchv.org](http://www.nchv.org) 1-800-838-4357

**National Suicide Support Number** -1-888- 784-2433 (1-888-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, such as clothing, public transportation tokens, and emergency shelter. You may need to contact several agencies in order 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 what programs are available and information on their guidelines. We have included some guidance below, but your local organizations are your best resources. Remember, it never hurts to ask!

All VA Medical Centers have **Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Coordinators** who are responsible for helping homeless veterans to access VA and community-based care. The HCHV program provides outreach, clinical assessments and referrals for medical and mental health care, long-term transitional residential assistance, case management and employment assistance with linkage to permanent housing. To locate your nearest HCHV Coordinator, call 1-877-222-8387 or go to [www.va.gov/homeless](http://www.va.gov/homeless).

**Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA)** provides assistance with information on benefits and entitlements, claims processing and support, trauma (PTSD) counseling, Veterans Homes for those in need of nursing care, and employment assistance through reintegration projects funded by the Federal government. Call 1-800-562-2308 or go to [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov).