



**THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' SERVICES
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CHERYL LUSSIER POPPE
Secretary, DVS

TO: Veterans' Services Officers
FROM: Department of Veterans' Services
RE: 2022 supplemental payment for veterans
DATE: February 18, 2022

Following a period of significant inflation, the federal government implemented the largest Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) in more than four decades. Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits increased 5.9 percent in 2022, the highest increase in the past forty years.

To mitigate the impact of the significant COLA on Chapter 115 recipient's payments, the Department of Veterans' Services will be issuing supplemental payments to municipalities / districts that are to be used for additional monthly payments to veterans receiving Chapter 115 benefits to cover the months impacted between the federal COLA and the updating of Massachusetts DVS budgets of assistance, which by law occurs in July.

The Department will be providing towns/districts a sum that would cover an additional fixed amount for each veteran monthly between January – June 2022, covering 100% of the cost, to decrease impact on municipal budgets.

Details of the Supplemental Payments to Chapter 115 Recipients

- Each active Chapter 115 recipient is to receive an additional fixed monthly payment for the months of January – June.
- The monthly amount per recipient is \$79.00, which was calculated as the largest potential decrease in any single Chapter 115 benefit recipient's budget.
- The March payment should include the monthly fixed amount for both January and February.

Details of the Payments to Municipalities/Districts

- Each municipality/district will be sent one (1) supplemental payment equal to six (6) months of the monthly fixed amount per Chapter 115 recipient – equal \$474 per Chapter 115 recipient. These funds are for direct veteran payments and are not to be used for any other purpose.
- Municipalities / districts are to distribute the additional monthly amount to each recipient at a frequency of their choosing – can be monthly or can be in one or a few lump sums.
- The Department will be covering 100% of the cost. This payment is not to be included in the reimbursement request amount.
- If at the end of FY22, you have not distributed to Chapter 115 recipients the amount allotted to your municipality/district, DVS will recoup the excess amount not distributed to recipients.
- If at the end of a month or the 6 months you have additional need– each municipality/district can request additional supplemental money to cover the Chapter 115 recipient payments.

Implementation and Assistance

Recognizing that this is a departure from standard operations, the Department is available to assist and answer questions as needed and is adding a certification of funds use to the implementation. This assistance will include:

- Implementing guidance: DVS will be promulgating implementing guidance to VSOs
- Q&A session: DVS will conduct at least one Q&A session to answer questions and take feedback on implementation of these payments.
- Spot audits: DVS will conduct spot checks across municipalities to check in with payments and offer ad-hoc support.
- Certification of fund use: At the end of state fiscal year 2022, no later than June 15, 2022, each municipality/district must submit a certification confirming the amount of payments made to veterans.

Future Certification

To align with the state budgets of assistance, the Department will, beginning in Calendar Year 2023, certify Chapter 115 recipients annually in July. This removes the potential annual decrease in benefits following a federal COLA. Additional guidance will be forthcoming on the change in certification timelines.

If you have questions about this guidance, please feel free to contact Evan.Makrinikolas@mass.gov. Thank you for all the hard work you do helping our Veterans.



Cheryl Lussier Poppe

Secretary

Department of Veterans' Services