

Military Veterans



Timber Pines



To honor, educate, and assist all US Military veterans, men and women by providing social opportunities, information on veterans' entitlements, and outreach activities that address needs beyond the scope of other support groups

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VA Benefits for Surviving Spouse

A surviving spouse may be eligible for VA death benefits, if specific eligibility requirements are met. Listed below are two VA programs, VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation and VA Survivors Pension, that provide financial benefits to eligible surviving spouses.

Understanding the eligibility requirements and completing the necessary paperwork can be complex and confusing. It is highly recommended that the surviving spouse seek assistance completing and submitting the required paperwork to the local VA Regional Office from the local Veterans Service Office, Veterans Service Officer (i.e. American Legion, DAV, VFW, etc.) and/or VA Regional Office.

I. VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (VA DIC) for Spouses

If you're the surviving spouse of a service member who died in the line of duty, or the survivor of a Veteran who died from a service-related injury/illness or the Veteran had received a designation of Permanently and Totally Disabled, you may be eligible to receive tax-free monetary benefit called VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (VA DIC).

A. VA DIC Eligibility For Surviving Spouse

The surviving spouse may be eligible for VA DIC benefits if they meet the requirements listed below:

1. One of these must be true. You:

- Married the Veteran or service member before January 1, 1957, or
- Married the Veteran or service member within 15 years of their discharge from the period of military service during which the qualifying illness or injury started or got worse, or
- Were married to the Veteran or service member for at least 1 year, or
- Had a child with the Veteran or service member, aren't currently remarried, and either lived with the Veteran or service member without a break until their death or, if separated, weren't at fault for the separation

Note: If you remarried on or after December 16, 2003, and you were 57 years of age or older at the time you remarried, you can still continue to receive compensation.

2. You'll also need to provide evidence showing that one of these descriptions is true for the Veteran or service member:

- The service member died while on active duty, active duty for training, or inactive-duty training, **or**
- The Veteran died from a service-connected illness or injury, **or**
- The Veteran didn't die from a service-connected illness or injury, but was eligible to receive VA compensation for a service-connected disability rated as totally disabling for a certain period of time

3. If the Veteran's eligibility was due to a rating of totally disabling, they must have had this rating:

- For at least 10 years before their death, **or**
- Since their release from active duty and for at least 5 years immediately before their death, **or**
- For at least 1 year before their death if they were a former prisoner of war who died after September 30, 1999

Note: "Totally disabling" means the Veteran's injuries made it impossible for them to work.

B. What Financial benefits will the surviving spouse receive?

The 2020 monthly tax-free VA DIC benefit for surviving spouses is **\$1340.14**.

C. How do I apply for compensation?

First you'll need to fill out an application for benefits. The application you fill out will depend on your survivor status.

If you're the surviving spouse of a service member who died while on active duty, your military casualty assistance officer will help you to complete an Application for VA DIC, Death Pension, and/or Accrued Benefits by a Surviving Spouse or Child (VA Form 21P-534a). The officer will help you mail the form to the correct VA regional office.

If you're the surviving spouse of a Veteran, a completed Application for VA DIC, Death Pension (VA Form 21P-534a) and/or Accrued Benefits (VA Form 21P-534EZ) needs to be submitted to the local VA Regional Office. The local Veterans Service Office, Veterans Service Officer (VSO) or VA Regional Office is available to provide assistance completing the forms.

II. VA Survivors Pension

A VA Survivors Pension offers monthly payments to qualified surviving spouses of wartime Veterans who meet certain income and net worth limits set by Congress.

A. Eligibility for a VA Survivors Pension as a Surviving Spouse

If you haven't remarried after the Veteran's death, and if the deceased Veteran didn't receive a dishonorable discharge and their service meets at least one of the requirements listed below, you may be eligible for this benefit.

At least one of these must be true. The Veteran:

- Entered active duty on or before September 7, 1980, and served at least 90 days on active military service, with at least 1 day during a covered war time period, **or**
- Entered active duty after September 7, 1980, and served at least 24 months or the full period for which they were called or ordered to active duty (with some exceptions), with at least 1 day during a covered war time period **or**
- Was an officer and started on active duty after October 16, 1981, and hadn't previously served on active duty for at least 24 months

And this must be true for you:

For 2020, your yearly family income must be less than \$9,224 and your net worth must be less than \$129,094 to meet limits set annually by Congress. Your net worth equals the value of everything you own (except your house, your car, and most home furnishings), minus any debt you owe. Using the assumption that the family income is \$7000, the annual pension would be \$2,224 (\$9,224 income limit minus \$7,000 annual income). The surviving spouse would receive monthly Survivors Pension payments of \$185.33 (\$2,224 divided by 12).

B. What wartime periods do you recognize for pension benefits?

Under current law, we recognize these wartime periods to decide eligibility for pension benefits:

- Mexican Border period (May 9, 1916, to April 5, 1917, for Veterans who served in Mexico, on its borders, or in adjacent waters)
- World War I (April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918)
- World War II (December 7, 1941, to December 31, 1946)
- Korean conflict (June 27, 1950, to January 31, 1955)
- Vietnam War era (February 28, 1961, to May 7, 1975 for Veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam during that period. August 5, 1964, to May 7, 1975, for Veterans who served outside of the Republic of Vietnam.)
- Gulf War (August 2, 1990, through a future date to be set by law or presidential proclamation)

C. How do I apply for a VA Survivors Pension?

The surviving spouse will need to complete Application for VA DIC, Death Pension Form (VA Form 21P-534a) and submit completed form to the local VA Regional Office. **It is highly recommended that the surviving spouse seek assistance completing and submitting**

the form from the local Veterans Service Office, Veterans Service Officer or VA Regional Office.