



## **Post Service Officer Bulletin October 2021**

### **Post Service Officer Guide**

- The Director, National Veterans Service, shall prepare and publish a revised edition of the “VFW GUIDE FOR POST SERVICE OFFICERS” during the first quarter of each **even** numbered calendar year. If you need a copy of the guide, please call state HQ or you can purchase one on the VFW Store.
- Each Department Service Officer (hereinafter referred as to DSO) shall ensure that all VFW Post, District and County Council Service Officers in the Department have a current edition of the VFW Guide.
- **SEC. 4. GUIDE FOR POST SERVICE OFFICERS**  
The VFW Manual of Procedure, Sec 218, Mandates that each Post Service Officer have the latest edition of the Guide for Post Service Officers. These may be purchased through your VFW Store, Post Quartermaster, Department Quartermaster, or Department Service Officer.

### **Service Officer Responsibilities**

- **What is a Post Service Officer?**  
PSO's are ambassadors of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Many PSOs get out of their Posts and take the word about veterans benefits to those who cannot come to them, whether in community centers, nursing homes, places of worship, VetCenters or just around town. The knowledge PSOs carry with them can help veterans and their survivors obtain the help they often desperately need.
- **What is a Department Service Officer?**  
DSO's file claims timely, review VA decisions, conduct hearings, advocate for veterans and their families, meet with veterans, develop evidence, answer requests for assistance and compile the departments monthly reports to both VFW NVS and Act 66.
- **What is a Post Service Officer's job?**
  1. Know the VA eligibility rules established by law.
  2. Provide Veterans and survivors counsel to the best of your ability.
  3. Help Veterans and survivors complete VA Forms.

4. Advise veterans to submit all forms to the DSO for completion.
5. Keep your Post/Members and survivors aware of all events, news, and information relevant to local, state and federal Veterans Services, and changes in the law.

### **Post Service Officer Responsibilities**

- Post Service Officers can assist with and review the veteran's claims documents and supporting evidence.
- The PSO must not take possession of any documents.
- The PSO will direct veterans to deliver all documents to their respective Department Service Officer (DSO).
- VA awards benefits based on the date of claim, so it is vital that claims should be sent to the DSO immediately by the veteran.
- Claims **must not be withheld** until all the supporting evidence is obtained, as there may be a loss of monetary benefit to the claimant.
- Will never release confidential information, such as what conditions were claimed or address of the claimant, etc. to parties other than the claimant or VFW accredited representatives.
- Inform the veterans (**preferably in writing**) that all application forms, evidence, etc., in connection with claims should be submitted to the Department Service Officer.

### **VA Benefits and Services**

- **Compensation:**  
VA can pay a monthly compensation if the veteran is at least 10% disabled as a result of Military Service. A Veteran can be given a service connection for his or her disability and be rated at 0%. This provides for treatment of the disability but because the disability is considered to be minor, no compensation is given.
- **Non-Service Connected Pension:**  
Non-Service Connected Pension is a benefit paid to wartime veterans who have limited or no income, and who are age 65 or older, or, if under 65, who are permanently and totally disabled.

Veterans who are or seriously disabled may qualify for Aid and Attendance (A&A) benefits and Special Monthly Compensation (SMC).

These are benefits that are paid in addition to the basic pension rate.

- **Healthcare:**

Hospital, outpatient medical, dental, pharmacy and prosthetic services

Domiciliary, nursing home and community base residential care

Sexual trauma counseling

Specialized health care for women veterans

Health and rehabilitation programs for homeless Veterans

Readjustment counseling

Alcohol and drug dependency treatment

Medical evaluation for disorders associated with military service in the Gulf War, or exposure to Agent Orange, radiation and other environmental hazards

- **Education:**

VA administers education benefits for active duty troops, veterans, reservists, and qualifying dependents

Post 9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33) and Montgomery GI Bill (Chapter 30) for active duty veterans

MGIB Selected Reserve (Section 1606) for Reservists

Dependents Educational Assistance (Chapter 35) for dependents

<http://explore.va.gov/education-training>

- **Home Loans:**

The VA offers a number of home loan services to eligible veterans, some military personnel, and certain surviving spouses.

Types of VA loans are:

- Guaranteed Loans
- Refinancing Loans
- Special Grants

- **Life Insurance:**

Service-members Group Life Insurance (SGLI) is low-cost term life insurance for service members and Reservists

Traumatic SGLI is automatically included in SGLI and provides for payment up to \$100,000 for service members who lose limbs or incur other serious injuries

Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI) is a renewable term life insurance for veterans who want to convert their SGLI up to an amount not to exceed the coverage they had when separated from service. Must apply within 1 year and 120 days from discharge.

Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance, also called “RH Insurance” is for service-connected veterans.

- **Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)**  
Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) can be payable to certain survivors of:
  - Service-members who died on active duty
  - Veterans who died from service-related disabilities, including disabilities that can be proven to be service-related (did not have to be receiving disability benefits before death)
  - Certain Veterans who were being paid 100% VA disability compensation at time of death
- **Burial:**  
VA offers certain benefits and services to honor Nation’s deceased veterans  
VA can furnish a monument to mark the grave of an eligible veteran

### VA Forms

- **VA Form 21-22** Appointment of Veterans Service Organization of Claimants Representatives
  - This form allows the VFW to represent the veteran and/or claimant in their VA Disability Claim.
  - Only an accredited Service Officer can sign these
  - **POST SERVICE OFFICERS CANNOT SIGN THESE**
- **VA Form 21-526EZ** Claim for Disability Compensation
- **VA Form 21-527EZ** Claim for Non-Service Connected Pension
- **VA Form 21-534EZ** Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) or Survivor’s Pension
- **VA Form 21P-530** Burial Benefits
- **VA Form 21-0996** Intent to File a claim. This gives the veteran/claimant one year to file and saves the date

All VA Forms can be found at [www.va.gov/vaforms](http://www.va.gov/vaforms) or contact your local accredited service officer

### What’s new – October 2021

- **PA VETConnect** – [www.dmva.pa.gov/vetConnect](http://www.dmva.pa.gov/vetConnect) a referral resource for veterans and their families. Resources include VA Benefits, employment, financial assistance, mental wellness, substance use, PTSD and more.

- VA prepares to get ahead of surge in backlogged claims – Starting in October, the VA will hire and train new staff to help get through more than 204,000 backlogged claims.
- VA Debt Collection – As of October 1, 2021 VA will resume their debt collection process. If a veteran owed money to VA, VA will be in contact via letter.
- COVID 19 booster – Some veterans, spouses and caregivers can receive the Pfizer vaccine booster shots from VA. Only people who have already received the full series of the Pfizer vaccine at least 6 months ago have been authorized to receive the Pfizer booster shot. Please send these individuals to their local VA Hospitals/Clinics.
- Agent Orange new presumptive conditions – Bladder cancer, Hypothyroidism and Parkinsonism were recently added to the list of presumptive conditions related to agent orange exposure. VA will automatically review previously denied claims for these conditions to determine if retroactive benefits are applicable. If a veteran or spouse was previously denied, their claim may be currently backlogged while VA determines the earliest effective date for benefits related to these conditions.
- Board of Veterans' Appeal: Currently there are over 40,000 legacy appeals (VA Form 21-0958 NOD) and over 40,000 Appeals modernization Act (VA Form 10182) currently waiting for a decision by the veterans' law judges. We tell Veterans it will be well over one year to get a decision from the judge.
- New presumptive conditions for Gulf War and post 9/11 veterans exposed to particulate matter: those who served in the Southwest Asia theater of operations beginning Aug 2, 1990 to present or Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Syria or Djibouti beginning Sept 19, 2001 to present are presumed to have been exposed to particulate matter. The Southwest Asia theater of operations refers to Iraq, Kuwait, neutral zone between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, Oman, Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman, Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea, Red Sea and the airspace above these locations. Veterans who believe they

may be eligible for presumptive service connection due to asthma, rhinitis, or sinusitis that began within 10 years of their separation from service are encouraged to apply for disability benefits.

- **Medicare/Tricare/VA insurance questions** – Humana has a longstanding relationship with the VFW to help veterans and their families achieve their best health. As a lead sponsor of the National VFW Convention, Humana provides a variety of information. We suggest referring veterans and/or spouses to Humana directly to help navigate the health insurance world and what would be best for each veteran. Pennsylvania’s contact would be Aaron McCoy [amccoy3@humana.com](mailto:amccoy3@humana.com)
- **VA App store for Veterans** – VA has more than 40 apps created specifically for veterans and their caregivers. All of these are available for Iphone and Android. My HealtheVet is the most popular app. It is a patient portal for your VA health records, make appointments and also secure message your healthcare providers.
- **Claim Sharks** – A claims shark is an individual or company that “assists” or “consults” veterans with VA claims even though they are not accredited with the VA. Many of these companies charge fees for their services. Most claim sharks advertise on social media, stating:
  - **Promising a guaranteed grant or increase in benefits**
  - **Telling clients they can “start” for free**
  - **Providing “coaching: during claims process**
  - **Giving guaranteed success rate**
  - **Stating “risk free. You only pay when you get paid.”**

If you hear things like this from your veteran community, remind veterans they should ask questions such as “Are you accredited” or you can forward the veteran to us and we have tools to use such as the Office of General Counsel (OGC) where we can search their accreditation credentials.

- **Vet Centers** – Community based counseling centers that provide a wide range of social and mental health services including professional readjustment counseling to eligible veterans, Active Duty National Guard, Reservists and their families. Locations in DuBois, Northeast Philadelphia Vet Center,

Center City Philadelphia Vet Center, Norristown, Bucks County, Trenton (NJ), Pittsburgh, White Oak, Wheeling (WV), Erie, Scranton, Harrisburg and Lancaster

Each Quarter the DSO will be sending out monthly bulletins/updates

Please instruct all Veterans/Claimants to send their VA paperwork to:

Veterans of Foreign Wars  
1000 Liberty Ave Room 1601  
Pittsburgh PA 15222

Questions/Comments contact:  
Liz Salvador, Department Service Officer  
Phone: 412-395-6259  
Fax: 412-395-6261  
[Elizabeth.salvador@va.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.salvador@va.gov)