

Helping York County Veterans Access the VA

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If you find a Veteran who is not receiving VA (Department of Veterans Affairs) Healthcare or VA Disability assistance, help them by discussing the following:

1. First question: Are you Veteran with an Honorable or Other-than-Honorable Discharge?

If yes, and you aren't receiving VA Healthcare, you should contact the VA (877-222-8387) and apply for VA Healthcare. Many will not think they have earned it or deserve it - THE RULES HAVE RECENTLY CHANGED - and if you weren't dishonorably discharged or don't already have some form of free health care, you should apply - for your own good. Even if you were dishonorably discharged, there are a few exceptions that may provide you access – contact the VA and ask.

2. Second Question: If you served (Active Duty or Guard/Reserve), are you receiving VA Disability Benefits? If not, do you believe you are entitled to them? If you are not receiving VA Disability, but feel you are deserving of it because you have a Service-related disability, you should apply for it by calling the VA and discussing an **Intent to File (800-827-1000)**.

3. Explain to the former Service Member: The VA is a large, complicated, bureaucracy that actually can do you some good, but it helps to work with someone who can access your records in their system. Once you call and apply for either VA Healthcare or VA Disability Assistance, you will be entered into the **VBMS (Veterans Benefits Management System)**. The VBMS is an online system the VA uses to manage each Veteran's service and service treatment records as well as all benefit applications other than healthcare. This includes the decisions on all claims.

4. Tell them: The MBVS (Maine Bureau of Veterans Benefits) in Springvale, Maine, can help you. You can call (207) 324-1839 or email them at Springvale.MaineBVS@Maine.gov. Be prepared to leave a message and phone number for them to call you back; it is a two-person office serving any of York County's Veterans and they usually don't take calls while serving a Vet, so they access the messages between Vets. You can also make an appointment to do a walk-in visit. These folks are advocates who will help you wade through the VA Bureaucracy to get what you have earned.

5. Encourage them to visit the Maine Bureau of Veterans' Service website: www.maine.gov/veterans. This site is a great place to review benefits and resources, some of which are unique to Maine. You can use this site to begin gathering information to determine what you may be eligible for. There is a Veteran's Resource guide that is very useful and a list of all the MBVS offices and their locations.

6. If they still have question, tell them: to call the Kennebunkport American Legion Post 159, at (207) 967-2400 and leave your name, number, and message asking for assistance. Someone will call you back.

7. Finally, inform them that the VA runs something called a Vet Center in Springvale right next to the MBVS office – it has a different, but necessary function. The Vet Center offers confidential help for Veterans, service members, and their families at no cost in a non-medical setting. Their services include counseling for needs such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and the psychological effects of military sexual trauma (MST). They are focused on the individual Veteran's condition rather than helping you understand **VA Healthcare or the VA Disability assistance process**.

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