



VA BENEFITS FOR VETERANS' SURVIVING SPOUSES

If you think any of the below programs apply to you, you can call or visit your county Veterans Service Commission for help submitting an application.

? First: Are you a “surviving spouse” to the VA?

For all benefits, you will need to show that you had a “valid” marriage to a deceased veteran and have not remarried. A valid marriage means you:

- were legally married for at least one year (12 months) at the time of the veteran's death, OR
- had a legal common law marriage for at least one year at the time of the veteran's death, OR
- believed you had a legal common law marriage for at least one year at the time of the veteran's death.

Fill out and mail [VA Form 21-686c](#) (Declaration of Status of Dependents) to let the VA know you are a surviving spouse. This form requires you to explain the dates of your marriage, dates of any former marriage(s), and your spouse's social security number.

**** TIP:** To make processing faster, send a copy of your marriage certificate with the form.



List of Benefits a Surviving Spouse Could Get

1. **Accrued Benefits:** if the VA grants your spouse benefits after they die, you might be able to get the back pay your spouse would have gotten.

****TIP:** If your spouse died while fighting a VA benefits claim, you can ask the VA to continue the claim on your spouse's behalf. This is called a request to substitute.

Fill out a request to substitute by submitting [VA Form 21p-0847](#). **You must submit this form within 1 year of the veteran's death.**

2. Survivor's Pension: a cash benefit for low-income spouses of war time veterans.

You may be eligible for this benefit if:

1. you never remarried;
2. Your spouse:
 - went to bootcamp before or on Sept. 7, 1980, served at least 90 days of active duty, and served more than one day in a “wartime period” (see table below), OR
 - went to bootcamp after Sept. 7, 1980, served at least 24 months of active duty, and served more than one day during a “wartime period,” OR
 - was an officer and started active duty after Oct, 16, 1981.
4. Your spouse did not receive a dishonorable discharge.

Eligible Wartime Periods

Conflict	Time Period	Must Have Married By
Mexican Border Period	May 9, 1916 – April 5, 1917	Dec. 14, 1944
World War I	April 6, 1917 – Nov. 11, 1918	Dec. 14, 1944
World War II	Dec. 7, 1941 – Dec. 31, 1946	Jan. 1, 1957
Korean Conflict	June 27, 1950 – Jan. 31, 1955	Feb. 1, 1965
Vietnam War	Feb. 28, 1961 – May 7, 1975 (for veterans who were deployed to Vietnam) Aug. 5, 1964 – May 7, 1975 (for veterans who served outside Vietnam)	May 8, 1985
Gulf War	Aug. 2, 1990 – a future date to be set by law or proclamation	Jan. 1, 2001



Fill out [VA Form 21P-534EZ](#). Mail or fax the form and the veteran's death certificate to the Pension Management Center.

3. Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC): a cash benefit called for spouses of veterans that died because of a service-connected condition.

Your spouse must have been rated “totally disabled” for one these periods:

- a. The 10 years before they died,
- b. Since their military discharge AND for the 5 years before they died,
- c. For POWs: for the entire year before they died.

4. **VA Aid and Attendance Benefit and Housebound Allowance**: an extra cash benefit for spouses receiving Survivors' Pension or DIC that also need help with:

- bathing,
- eating,
- dressing, or
- medication.



Fill out [VA Form 21-2680](#)

**** TIP:** If you have any of the following information, include it in your application:

- a doctor's report showing that you need housebound care
- a note detailing how you perform your daily activities
- a note explaining how your illness or injury affects your ability to do things, like take a bath, on your own

5. **Death Gratuity Payment**: a payment of \$100,000 to surviving spouses when a veteran dies on active duty from a service-connected condition.

To apply for a Death Gratuity Payment, fill out [DD Form 397](#). Submit it to the Casualty Assistance Representative who was been assigned to assist you, or to the Service Casualty Office if you do not have a Casualty Assistance Representative working with you.

6. **Survivors Health Care (CHAMPVA)**: a health care program that can help cover some of your health care services and supplies.

You may be eligible for CHAMPVA if you were married to a veteran who:

- died from a service-connected disability, OR
- was rated "totally disabled" from a service-connected disability at the time they died, or
- died in the line of duty.

You can apply by submitting an application for CHAMPVA Benefits ([VA Form 10-10d](#)) and other Health Insurance Certification ([VA Form 10-7959c](#))

7. Home Loans: a VA home loan guaranty you can use to buy or renovate a home or refinance a home loan you already have.

You may be eligible for a VA home loan if you:

- were married to a veteran who died from service-connected causes and never remarried or remarried after age 57 and after Dec. 16, 2003, or
- were married to a veteran who is listed as MIA or was a POW for at least 90 days.



You can apply for a Certificate of Eligibility using [VA Form 26-1880](#). You should include a copy of the veteran's DD Form 214 to the VA.

8. Burial in VA National Cemeteries: burial in VA national cemeteries is available at no cost for surviving spouses of veterans who were eligible for burial in VA national cemeteries.

What is an eligible veteran?

A veteran is typically eligible for burial in a VA national cemetery if they served on active-duty for at least 24 months and enlisted after Sept. 7, 1980 or became an officer after Oct. 16, 1981. Active duty training, by itself, while serving in the reserves or National Guard, does not qualify.

How to Contact LASC and SEOLS:

Request Services Online at www.columbuslegalaid.org or seols.org

FRANKLIN & MADISON

Call (614) 241-2001 or Toll Free 1-888-246-4420

1108 City Park Avenue, Columbus, OH 43206

Office Hours: 8:30am-5:00pm Monday-Friday

DELAWARE, MARION, MORROW, & UNION

Call (740) 383-2161 or Toll Free 1-888-301-2411

150 Oak Street, Marion, OH 43302

Office Hours: 9:00am-5:00pm Monday-Friday

SEOLS: 1-844-302-1800

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