

## Brief Explanation of Some VA Benefits

### Access to VA Health Care

With over 1400 sites of care, the VA is the nation's largest provider of health care services. However, limited budget and high demand for this health care has necessitated that a veteran meet certain eligibility requirements before accessing care. In order to be eligible for health care (be it prescriptions or surgery) the veteran must meet one of the follow criteria:

- Have a Service Connected condition
- Received a Purple Heart or be a Former POW
- Be in Receipt of Non-Service Connected Pension Benefits
- Been exposed to Agent Orange in Vietnam
- Be within 5 years of discharge and have served in a combat theater since 1998
- Meet an Income/Asset test:
  - Single Veteran Income less than ca. \$35,000 (after medical expenses)
  - Married Veteran, Joint Income less than ca. \$38,000 (after medicals)
  - Net Worth cannot exceed \$80,000 (Assets (not Home) + Annual Income)

### Compensation

This benefit provides free health care and the possibility of monthly compensation for health conditions which have been formally recognized by the VA as "service connected." A service connected disability is any current, chronic health condition which has its origins in the veteran's active duty. Such conditions can range from combat wounds, health conditions (e.g. hypertension) diagnosed during active duty service or conditions as the result of chemical exposure during active duty (e.g. mesothelioma due to asbestos exposure).

The most common service connected condition is Hearing Loss and Tinnitus (ringing in the ears). Due to the noise exposure associated with military service (especially those that served in combat) and the lack of hearing protection, many of our veterans suffer noise-induced hearing problems which may be, at least partially, attributable to their military service.

Once a condition is determined to be service connected, a disability percentage is established. This rating corresponds to the average earning capacity impairment due to the symptoms associated with the service connected disability. These range from 0% to 100%. The benefits range from just over \$100 for a 10% disability to over \$2,700 for one found to be totally disabled.

### Non-Service Connected Pension (for Veteran or Surviving Spouse)

Pension benefits serve as our Nation's safety net for war-time era veterans. To qualify, a veteran must have served during a period of war, and meet income and asset eligibility tests. If the veteran is under 65, he or she must have health conditions which prevent employment. This disability requirement is waived for veterans over 65; they only must meet the economic tests (income after out-of-pocket medical expenses):

- **Basic Pension:**
  - Single Veteran – \$12,256 (\$1,021/mo)
  - Married Veteran – \$16,051 (\$1,337/mo)
  - Surviving Spouse -- \$8,219 (\$684/mo)
- **Pension with Housebound Benefits** (substantially confined to home):
  - Single Veteran – \$14,978 (\$1,248/mo)
  - Married Veteran – \$18,773 (\$1,564/mo)
  - Surviving Spouse -- \$10,046 (\$837/mo)
- **Pension with Aid & Attendance** (Blind, Patient in a Nursing Home, or one who requires regular assistance meeting their daily needs):
  - Single Veteran – \$20,447 (\$1,703/mo)
  - Married Veteran – \$24,239 (\$2,019/mo)
  - Surviving Spouse – \$13,138 (\$1,094/mo) (2012 Rates)

Once a veteran is determined eligible for Pension benefits, the VA provides free medical care and non-VA medical expenses (including those of the spouse) may be partially reimbursed. For surviving spouses receiving Pension, VA care is NOT available, but partial reimbursement for medical expenses is available. Pension recipients typically must file Eligibility Verification Report (EVR) each year, with which we can assist.

### **Veterans Assistance**

The Lane County Veterans' Service Office can provide more details about these, or other benefits, based on military service. We are honored to help veterans and their families apply for VA benefits and to help ensure that the veteran and their family receives the maximum benefit to which they are entitled under law.

Please contact us to schedule an appointment either at our office, or in your home:

**Joseph J. Reiley, Lane County Veterans Services Officer**  
**Shannon V. Johnson, Asst. Veterans Services Officer**  
**151 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 460**  
**Eugene, OR 97401**  
**(541) 682-4191**

We also travel to Florence, Cottage Grove, and Oakridge, on at least a monthly basis to serve veterans and their families directly in those communities. Please call for details.

## **Veteran Service Providers – Lane County**

### **Lane County Veteran Service Office**

151 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Ave., Ste 460  
Eugene, OR 97401  
(541) 682-4191

Appointments for new clients, walk-ins on Tuesday & Thursdays (except first Thursday of month). Assists Veterans and their families determine their eligibility for benefits based on their military service. Advocates for Veterans in benefit application process.

### **Eugene Vet Center**

1255 Pearl St, Suite 200  
Eugene, OR 97401  
(541) 465-6918

Appointment Necessary. Provides readjustment counseling services for Veterans of combat theaters.

### **Roseburg VA Medical Center**

913 NW Garden Valley Boulevard  
Roseburg, OR 97470  
1 (800) 549-8387

Urgent Care w/o Appointment, otherwise must be enrolled and have appointment. Provides outpatient and inpatient care for medical and mental health needs of qualifying, enrolled Veterans.

### **Eugene Community Based Outpatient Clinic**

100 River Ave  
Eugene, OR 97404  
(541) 607-0897

Must be enrolled and have appointment. Provides outpatient primary care for medical and mental health needs. Satellite clinic of Roseburg VAMC.

### **Eugene VA Behavioral Health, Recovery and Reintegration Services**

211 E. 7<sup>th</sup> Ave  
Eugene, OR 97401  
(541) 242-0440  
(541) 242-0445

Specialty care for mental health conditions (available through referral from VA primary care provider) and specialty services for Veterans at risk of- or currently homeless, including medical, mental health and D&A treatment, vocational rehabilitation and housing assistance.