



# VFW NEWSLETTER

## DEPARTMENT SERVICE OFFICER

### COMMRADES

**This is vital information concerning the ever changing world of claims and benefits**

**Military Eligibility Shrinking:** The VFW Washington Office received a briefing at the Pentagon about an Army in transition after 12 years of nonstop war, an ongoing budget battle, and the fact that America and her allies will still need a strong and flexible Army after our forces exit Afghanistan in 2014. Approximately 130,000 soldiers separate from the Army annually, and even though budget decisions have yet to decide how much smaller the future Army will be, recruiters are facing one harsh reality today: The pool of eligible 17 to 24-year-old recruits is shrinking on a national scale. There are 33.1 million Americans aged 17 to 24, according to the 2012 U.S. Census, but according to the Army, only 7.7 million were eligible to join the Army. The three-fourths ruled ineligible were principally due to health, medical and/or aptitude reasons, which mean military recruiters have to compete with industry as well as colleges and universities for America's top youth.

**DOD Caregiver Resources Guide:** The Defense Department's Office of Warrior Care has compiled a Caregiver Resource Directory specifically for the caregivers of recovering service members. It includes contact information on more than 300 supportive governments and non-profit organizations, to include the VFW. The directory is sorted by the most common, everyday needs, and is available in print and downloadable electronic-versions. The e-version can be found at <http://warriorcare.dodlive.mil/files/2013/08Caregiver-Directory-Printer-Friendly8-5x-11.pdf>. To provide feedback on the Caregiver Resource Directory, or to request a printed copy of the directory, please e-mail [info@nrd.gov](mailto:info@nrd.gov).

## Important Documents

In order to expedite benefits delivery, Veterans seeking a VA benefit for the first time must submit a copy of their service discharge form (DD-214, DD-215, or for World War II Veterans, a WD form), which documents service dates and type of discharge, or provides full name, military service number, and branch and dates of service.

The Veteran's service discharge form should be kept in a safe location accessible to the Veteran and next of kin or designated representative.

The following documents will be needed for claims processing related to a Veteran's death:

1. Veteran's marriage certificate for claims of a surviving spouse or children.
2. Veteran's death certificate if the Veteran did not die in a VA health care facility.
3. Children's birth certificates or adoption papers to determine children's benefits.
4. Veteran's birth certificate to determine parents' benefits.

## eBenefits

eBenefits is a joint VA/Department of Defense (DOD) Web portal that provides resources and self-service capabilities to Servicemembers, Veterans, and their families to apply, research, access, and manage their VA and military benefits and personal information through a secure Internet connection.

**Through eBenefits Veterans can:** apply for benefits, view their disability compensation claim status, access official military personnel documents (e.g., DD Form 214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty), transfer entitlement of Post-9/11 GI bill to eligible dependents (Service members only), obtain a VA-guaranteed home loan Certificate of Eligibility, and register for and update direct deposit information for certain benefits. New features are added regularly.

In order to register for an eBenefits account, Veterans must be listed in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting system (DEERS) and first obtain a DoD Self Service (DS) Logon. Note: For those without a DEERS record, VA will first need to verify military service and add the information to DEERS. This is most likely for Veterans who served prior to 1982. Individuals should contact a VA regional office for assistance in being added to DEERS.

A DS Logon is an identity (user name and password) that is used by various DOD and VA Websites, including eBenefits. Those registered in DEERS are eligible for a DS Logon. A DS Logon is valid for the rest of your life.

Identity verification: Many people will be able to verify their identity online by answering a few security questions. A re may need to visit a VA regional office or TRICARE Service Center to have their identities verified. Servicemembers may verify their identity online by using their Common Access Card.

Military retirees may verify their identity online using their Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) Logon. Veterans in receipt of VA benefits via direct deposit may have their identity verified by calling 1-800-827-1000 and selecting option 7. eBenefits users with Premium access with appropriate My HealthVet access can login to their My HealthVet account using the single sign on feature.

There will be and mandatory Post Service Officer class the 12 October 2013. The class will be at Post 6658 Macon. The Class will have representatives from VA Regional Office. VA Hospital, National Cemetery Health eligibility. Post and District leadership is encouraged to attend. The class will be from 0800- 1530 it is going to be educational and informative. Have a Great Veterans Day.

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