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1-1 Commonly Used Abbreviations and Terms

A&A Aid and Attendance describes a severity of disability that is beyond Housebound condition. This may also add additional payments to Compensation or Pension from the VA.

BX this is the Base Exchange, and is the same thing as PX, Post Exchange.

CRDP Concurrent Retirement and Disability Payments, this acronym was instituted in 2004 for the current **CR and CRSC** Concurrent retirement pay for military retirees in addition to their compensation payments from the VA. This benefit is paid by the Department of Defense.

CR stands for Concurrent Receipt

CRSC stands for Combat Related Special Compensation

HB Housebound describes severity of disability that may add additional payment to Compensation or Pension from the VA.

NSC Non Service Connected - Injury or illness that exists, but is not directly linked to service time.

RO Regional Office - Place where claims and the benefits portion of the VA are handled. VA Medical Centers fall under the Health Care branch of the VA. Regional Offices are under the Benefits branch.

SC Service Connected - Directly linked to injury or illness acquired or aggravated in the service. SC status can only be recognized after a claim is filed and ruled favorably on by the Veterans Administration.

SSA Social Security Administration - These benefits are explained in a later portion of the booklet.

SSI Supplemental Security Income

SSD Social Security Disability

SO Service Officer, representative of one of the service organizations, such as the Disabled American Veterans or the Veterans of Foreign Wars. They may assist in filing claims.

VA Veterans Administration - Formally, the Department of Veterans Affairs.

VBC Veteran's Benefits Counselor. Employee of the VA who works with veterans in exploring their benefits eligibility.

VIST Visually Impairment Services Team. VA Medical Facility Program that helps visually impaired patients.

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1-2 How To Get Help

Any veteran, or family member of a veteran can get assistance from a Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office. You will be connected to the nearest Regional Office by dialing:

1 (800) 827 1000

You can access additional information by computer over the Internet.

Department of Veterans Affairs Homepage: www.va.gov

The VA's webpage has been greatly reconfigured in 2007 and it is now much logically laid out and it is much easier to find information.

The VA maintains an excellent website that deals with survivor's benefits. This site continues to be improved and expanded. To access the website go to:

<http://www.vba.va.gov/survivors/vabenefits.htm>

You may also decide to go to the Regional Office in person and see a VBC, Veterans Benefits Counselor. They can assist you with your questions.

You may seek assistance from a Service Organization such as the VFW, BVA or the DAV. A list of all the recognized service organizations is provided in Annex 1 and web address are available in Annex 4. These organizations typically ask the veteran to sign a "Power of Attorney". In this instance this only allows them access to VA paperwork on the veteran. There is a further explanation in Annex 1 also.

Blinded Veterans Association Homepage: www.bva.org

For visually impaired veterans, the VIST, Visual Impairment Services Team Coordinator may be of assistance. Legal Blindness has many special provisions and services outside and inside the VA. Each VA medical facility has a VIST Coordinator.

The Outpatient Social Worker at your nearest VA medical facility should also prove to be a valuable resource in answering questions.

One of the most confusing things about the VA is the fact there are 3 branches and they are not easily connected at any one location. VA Medical Centers provide health care. VA Regional Offices provide actions on benefits such as compensation, GI Bill and other entitlements associated with being a veteran. The Cemetery Service provides for the use and maintenance of National Cemeteries. In this booklet you are provided key phone numbers and contact points for each of these services.

The VA does not connect directly with the Department of Defense. Retirees may need to do actions in both systems at times. We have attempted to provide key DOD contacts and phone numbers (refer to Annex 5).

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1-3 State Benefits

Each state has benefits for veterans. The benefits differ from state to state. Each state also has a website that can be used to research veteran benefits.

There is a combined website for the directors of each state's Department of Veterans Affairs: www.nasdva.com

Or, you can do a search of the Internet by going to Google (www.google.com) and doing a search. An example of a search would be:

Veterans Benefits + Rhode Island

This is an excellent way to get information on veteran related activities in the state you live in.

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1-4 Who is a Spouse

Who Is a Spouse?

Under VA definition a spouse is: A member of the opposite sex who is married to a veteran.

The VA recognizes common law marriage if the state of residence recognizes common law marriages. (Check with your local Regional Office). You prove you are a spouse by:

- A certified copy of your marriage license
- An affidavit from the person who married you
- An affidavit from an eyewitness

In the case of common law marriage, there are specific conditions in various states, which must be met in order to legally establish a common law marriage. The VA only recognizes common law marriages in states that legally recognize these relationships. For proof of common law marriage, the VA demands affidavits from two individuals who can attest to the husband and wife relationship.

Must you live together?

There are acceptable reasons for not living together, and still be considered married. The most common example of this is when one member is in a nursing home.

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1-5 Who is a Dependent?

Children are dependents until they reach age 18. Stepchildren in your household, adopted children and illegitimate children fall under the dependent category. The exception to the 18 year old rule is when children marry before the age of 18.

There are also exceptions for individuals being considered dependent children past the age of 18. These can include incapacitation prior to age 18 or VA approved schooling.

In some instances parents may be dependent and considered part of the household. One needs to check with RO to clarify if parents can be considered legal dependents.

In all cases, proof of relationship will be necessary. This can include a birth certificate, an affidavit from the delivery doctor, two affidavits from persons with knowledge of your relationship to the children, or school records. Again, check with RO for clarification on documentation.

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1-6 Benefits for Having Spouse and Children

If the veteran is drawing Compensation from the VA after reaching a rating of 30% there is additional compensation added for each dependent.

If the veteran is drawing NSC Pension there is additional money for each dependent, and benefits in medical cost deductions, and possibly schooling deductions. It is important to keep in mind that income of dependents may count as part of the veteran's income used in determining eligibility for NSC Pension. For clarification of a specific family situation it is best to contact your nearest RO.

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1-7 Benefits for Care Providers

For more information on this topic go to:

http://www.armytimes.com/news/2010/04/military_veterans_caregivers_041910w/

In 2010 Congress passed a bill that included benefits for Caregivers of very severely injured veterans. Initially, this bill seemed to cover the caregivers for Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans, with no announcement when or if the bill would cover veterans from other eras. All the details of this bill were not available at the time this booklet went to press.

What is believed to be involved includes:

1. The veteran may designate one family member to be the primary care provider
2. That individual will be paid a stipend by the VA
3. If that individual does not have healthcare, they may be eligible for CHAMPVA
4. The VA will provide training for the individual to meet the veteran's need
5. Respite care will be provided at time for the veteran

Editor's Note: The bill included a 9 month implementation period during which the details of the bill's provision would be finalized (the bill was passed in the sprint and is not finalized at the time this went to press). There is currently no VA website for this topic.

It is recommended that an individual check with RO to see what the latest updates are on this benefit.

