

Readjustment Counseling

Vet centers are located around the country to help veterans deal with readjustment problems. Veterans who would like counseling can contact one of the federal veterans centers listed below or call the state Division of Veterans' Affairs at 888-838-7697 for more information.*

Albany	518-626-5130
Babylon	631-661-3930
Binghamton	607-722-2393
Bronx	718-367-3500
Brooklyn	718-630-2830
Buffalo	716-862-7350
Hicksville (Nassau)	516-348-0088
Middletown	845-342-9917
New York (Harlem)	646-273-8139
New York (Manhattan)	212-742-9591
Rochester	585-232-5040
Staten Island	718-816-4499
Syracuse	315-478-7127
Watertown	315-782-5479
White Plains	914-682-6250
Woodhaven (Queens)	718-296-2871

* Log on to www.va.gov for a list of federal VA outpatient clinics in New York State and the St. Albans domiciliary in Jamaica.



A Message to Veterans from Assemblymember John T. McDonald III



The nearly one million veterans and their families living in New York State are a powerful voice — pushing for better veterans' programs and benefits. The state Assembly has supported many of the programs veterans have fought for, helping them to receive important benefits and services.

Enclosed is information about the many programs and services available through the New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Benefits are not awarded automatically — veterans and their families must apply for them. For more information, contact your nearest veterans' counselor listed in the New York State Government section of the telephone book under "Veterans' Affairs."

I am grateful for your contributions to our country and pledge my continued dedication to the needs of all veterans. I look forward to working with you in the future. If you have any questions or concerns on this or any other matter, please contact my district office.

John T. McDonald III
Member of Assembly

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Information

Veterans' benefits are not awarded automatically. Contact the state's **Division of Veterans' Affairs** at **888-838-7697**, visit www.veterans.ny.gov or email, DVAInfo@veterans.ny.gov.

Education

The federal government offers several programs for veterans and service persons seeking assistance for education or vocational training. Visit the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs at www.va.gov or call 800-827-1000. You can also contact the NYS Division of Veterans' Affairs at 888-838-7697 for more information.

In addition, if you meet the requirements, under the provisions of the GI Bill Fairness Act of 2011, you may be eligible for tuition and fees if attending private colleges and universities in seven states: Arizona, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Texas.

State benefits

Veterans Tuition Awards. Eligible veterans are those who served in Vietnam, Afghanistan

or the Persian Gulf, have earned an Expeditionary Medal and have received a discharge under honorable conditions. For the 2012-2013 academic year, the awards are set at \$5,595 or the cost of tuition, whichever is less, and the amount is expected to be \$5,895 for the 2013-2014 academic year. These awards apply to full-time study and part-time study for eligible veterans enrolled in either an undergraduate degree, graduate degree, diploma and certificate programs at degree-granting institutions or noncredit vocational training programs of at least 320 clock hours specifically approved by the New York State Education Department. Vocational students should contact HESC about tuition eligibility. In all other instances, to establish eligibility, applicants must apply to the New York Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) and must also apply for the state Tuition Assistance Program, known as TAP, and to the federal Pell Grant Program with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Log on to www.hesc.com or call 888-697-4372 for information.

Children of Veterans (Regents) Awards. Provides eligible children of deceased veterans, those missing in action or prisoners of war or those service-connected disabled veterans rated 40 percent or greater an annual, non-competitive monetary award. The parent must be a New York State resident

or must have been a New York State resident at time of death.

Military Service Recognition Scholarships.

Available to certain dependents of military personnel killed, severely and permanently disabled or missing in action while serving in a combat zone or while engaged in hostilities or training for hostilities after August 2, 1990.

Operation Recognition.

Awards high school diplomas to veterans of World War II, Korea and Vietnam who left school before graduating. GED recipients are also eligible.

Hearing Aids. This is a federal benefit. A veteran first has to register at the health administration/enrollment section of one's local VA Medical Center. If eligible, the hearing aid, repairs and future batteries would be provided at no charge to the veteran. Log on to www.prosthetics.va.gov/Hearing_Aids.asp for specifics.

Career advancement

Under the Veterans' Bill of Rights for Employment Services, veterans are entitled to priority service at all NYS Department of Labor offices in job referrals, employment counseling,

vocational testing and other services. For more information call 800-342-3358 or contact your nearest NYS Department of Labor office.

Review of discharge

Military Boards of Review have authority to correct and upgrade most discharges based on facts presented for consideration.

Civil service

Federal benefits. On competitive exams only, there is a 10-point preference for eligible disabled veterans and a 5-point preference for wartime honorable discharge veterans. Some requirements may be waived and special priority given in particular job categories. Unremarried surviving spouses, certain wives and spouses and mothers of disabled veterans may also be eligible for preference.

State and local benefits. Credit preferences and retention rights are available for disabled and non-disabled veterans for competitive positions.

In addition, Section 55-c of the New York State Civil Service Law, permits the Civil Service Commission to designate 500 positions normally filled through competitive examination to be filled through the appointment of qualified wartime veterans with disabilities. For an application and program information, log on to www.cs.ny.gov/dpm/c55.cfm or call 518-233-3118, 866-297-4356.



Automobile

Federal benefits. Severely disabled veterans may qualify for a one-time payment of up to \$19,505 toward the purchase of an automobile or other conveyance. Automobile adaptive equipment grants are also available.

State benefits. Auto registration, Thruway permits and public campsites and park permits are free for qualified, severely disabled veterans who receive VA adaptive vehicle grants.

Home loan guarantee

Certain veterans and spouses may be eligible for loans from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to buy homes. Log on to www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/ for information. New York State provides low-interest mortgages through the State of New York Mortgage Agency known as SONYMA. Visit www.nyshcr.org or call 800-382-4663.

Property tax exemptions

Municipalities have the option to grant an alternative exemption. This provides a property tax exemption of 15 percent of assessed value for veterans who served during wartime, and an additional 10 percent exemption for those who served in a combat zone. Disabled veterans are provided with an additional exemption equal to one-half of their service-connected disability ratings, multiplied by the assessed value of the property. Check with your assessor to determine the maximum exemption limits in your community.

Veterans who have received the Armed Forces, Navy, Marine Corps or Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal are eligible and, under certain conditions, members of the reserves are also eligible.

Municipalities that offer the alternative exemption can increase the limits imposed under the Real Property Tax Law. In 1997, municipalities were given the option to allow veterans residing in cooperative apartments to apply for the exemption.

The eligible funds veterans' real property tax exemption is another benefit and provides a partial exemption where property owned by a veteran or certain other persons designated in the law has been purchased with pension, bonus or insurance monies, referred to as "eligible funds."

There is also a third exemption, known as the Cold War veterans exemption,

available for residential property of veterans who served during the Cold War period covering Sept. 2, 1945, to Dec. 26, 1991, and who do not receive eligible funds or alternative veterans' exemptions.

Unremarried surviving spouses may also be eligible for all three exemptions.

These exemptions are not automatic and are not provided by all municipalities. Veterans should contact their local assessor's office for information and an application. Also, visit www.tax.ny.gov or call 888-838-7697 for additional details.



Blindness

Federal benefits. Blindness need not be service-connected. Guide dogs and electronic and mechanical aids may be available.

State benefits. An annuity is available to blind wartime veterans and qualified unremarried surviving spouses plus a percentage increase, if any, for compensation, and pension benefits administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in the previous year. The NYS Division of Veterans' Affairs publishes by Feb. 1 of each year the amount of the annuity, as adjusted. Call 518-486-3602.

Disability benefits

Compensation. Veterans may apply for compensation for a service-connected disability at any time. The disability rating is based on the severity of the condition and the reduction in earning power.

Non-service connected disability pension. A monthly pension, based on a financial means test, may be available for eligible wartime veterans with disabilities, whether service-connected or not who are no longer able to work. Veterans must be

permanently and totally disabled or have reached the age of 65.

Licenses and permits. Veterans with a 40 percent or greater disability rating are eligible for low-cost hunting and fishing licenses, and free use of state parks, historic sites and recreational sites. A park pass is necessary.

Home accessibility grants

Federal benefits. Veterans who are totally and permanently disabled may be eligible for grants for building or remodeling a home to adapt it to meet their wheelchair needs.

State benefits. Seriously disabled veterans who have received federal funds for houses with special fixtures can be exempt from property taxes. The same exemption applies to the veteran's unremarried surviving spouse, who may transfer the exemption to any new housing unit used as a residence.

Nursing home care

New York State has five veterans' homes in operation for eligible veterans and their dependents. Four are operated by the NYS Department of Health:

A 242-bed home in Oxford, Chenango County; a 250-bed facility in St. Albans, Queens; a 126-bed home in Batavia, Genesee County; and a 252-bed facility in Montrose, Westchester County.

The fifth veterans' facility – the Long Island State Veterans Home – is a 350-bed facility on the campus of the State University at Stony Brook, operated by Stony Brook and the first in the country to be integrated into the teaching, research, health care and regional development mission of a major university.

Health-related care and nursing services are available at all facilities. Admission preference is based on severity of illness or disability and need for care.

Burial

Federal benefits. Financial assistance for burial and plot expenses is available for certain eligible veterans. Claims must be filed within two years after permanent interment. Burial in national cemeteries is available to veterans and certain family members. Also, an American flag is available to drape the casket and to be given to the next of kin. Call 800-827-1000.

State benefits. Burial expenses and the cost of headstones for indigent state veterans and certain family members are authorized by the county of the veteran's residence.

Supplemental burial allowance. Authorizes a supplemental burial allowance of up to \$6,000 for certain military personnel killed in combat or while on active duty in hostile or imminent

danger zones on or after Sept. 29, 2003.

Survivor's benefits (federal)

Dependency and indemnity compensation. DIC payments may be available to eligible spouses and certain dependents of veterans who died of service-related injuries or disease. Monthly awards are based on the veteran's military rank. Certain remarried surviving spouses may also be eligible.

Surviving spouse pension. Certain surviving spouses and single children of deceased veterans with wartime service may be eligible for a non-service connected pension based on need. Minor children may be eligible even if the surviving spouse remarries.

Insurance

Designated beneficiaries of deceased persons covered by all forms of government insurance may submit their claims to the nearest counseling center run by the state's Division of Veterans' Affairs. Visit: www.insurance.va.gov/sglisite/converting/SGLI.htm to convert a Servicemen's Group Life Insurance (SGLI) policy after discharge.