



Meeting with your Veteran Service Officer

What to bring to your first appointment

Congratulations on making the decision to meet with a Veterans Service Officer and claim the benefits you have earned through your service. If this is your first visit with a service officer, you will want to bring documentation with you to support your claim.

To file a claim:

- Original or certified copy of your discharge papers (DD214)
- Medical evidence of your diagnosis including statement(s) from doctor(s) showing current medical condition being claimed that list date of diagnosis, doctor's name & contact information
- Medical evidence indicating that the disability was caused by or arose during your active duty service
- Medical treatment records
- Collateral statement(s)-eyewitness accounts
- Other evidence you believe will support your claim

Supplementary items (if they apply to your situation)

- Copy of marriage certificate
- Copy(s) of birth certificate(s) for each claimed dependent, including spouse
- Copy of death certificate (if applying for survivor benefits)
- Copy of guardianship document/court letters
- Copy of Social Security award letters showing current benefit rate
- Copy of pension or annuity letter showing current benefit rate
- Any correspondence from US Department of Veteran Affairs
- Social security numbers for each claimed dependent
- Bank account and routing numbers (required for direct deposit of VA payments)

NOTE: All documents (especially DD-214) should be either originals or certified copies. A claim may be filed without all of the required documents; however, all of the above information relevant to the claim will be needed before a decision can be made on your claim. Claims received without full information may take longer to process or be denied until the information is received. Claims based on a non-service connected disability or death generally require active duty during a recognized wartime period.

Eligible Wartime Periods

Under current law, VA recognizes the following wartime periods to determine eligibility for VA Pension benefits:

- Mexican Border Period (May 9, 1916 – April 5, 1917 for Veterans who served in Mexico, on its borders, or adjacent waters)
- World War I (April 6, 1917 – November 11, 1918)
- World War II (December 7, 1941 – December 31, 1946)
- Korean conflict (June 27, 1950 – January 31, 1955)
- Vietnam era (February 28, 1961 – May 7, 1975 for Veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam during that period; otherwise August 5, 1964 – May 7, 1975)
- Gulf War (August 2, 1990 – through a future date to be set by law or Presidential Proclamation)