



Department of  
Veterans Affairs

# Native American Veterans



Veterans Benefits Administration



Native Americans, like other Americans who have served in the military services, can be potentially eligible for a wide variety of veterans benefits.

## **DISABILITY COMPENSATION**

Veterans who are disabled by injury or disease incurred or aggravated during active service in line of duty during wartime or peacetime service and were discharged or separated under other than dishonorable conditions may be compensated for their service-connected injury or disease. Veterans who are found to be eligible for disability compensation are entitled to monthly payments. The amount of payment depends upon the degree of disability. In addition, a wide variety of benefits, including specially adapted autos and homes, are available to certain severely disabled veterans.

## **PENSION**

Veterans of wartime service may be eligible for a pension if permanently and totally disabled for reasons not traceable to service. A pension is awarded on the basis of need. A pension is not payable to those who have estates that can provide adequate maintenance.

## **EDUCATION**

VA administers education programs for veterans and active duty servicepersons. Native American veterans who participated in the Montgomery G.I. Bill while on active duty have eligibility for 10 years after their last discharge or release. The Montgomery G.I. Bill also provides educational assistance to members of the Selected Reserve.

Spouses and children of the deceased or seriously disabled Native American veterans may also be eligible for VA educational assistance.

Native American veterans entitled to VA educational benefits are also entitled to educational and vocational counseling. This counseling is also available to service members within 6 months of their separation date from military service or within 12 months after being separated.

## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Native American veterans who served in our Armed Forces during World War II or thereafter and suffered a service-connected disability in active service which entitles them to compensation at a rate of twenty percent or greater may be eligible for vocational rehabilitation. A disabled veteran will be given an initial evaluation to establish eligibility and entitlement and to determine whether extended evaluation, independent living services, educational or vocational training, or employment assistance is needed. Native American veterans who are seriously disabled may receive services and assistance to improve their ability to live more independently in their community. After completion of training, VA will assist the veteran in finding a suitable job. Educational and vocational counseling is also available to service members within 6 months of their separation date from military service or within 12 months after being separated.



## HOME LOANS

Native American veterans with sufficient active-duty service may obtain VA-guaranteed loans to purchase or improve houses, manufactured homes, and condominiums.

## MEDICAL CARE

A full range of health care services is available at VA medical facilities for eligible Native Americans. A law recently passed by Congress made several changes in a veteran's eligibility for VA health care. The intent of the law is to ensure that care at a VA medical facility is provided to service-connected veterans and to lower-income veterans. Those veterans with higher incomes will be provided VA health care on a space-available basis and may be charged a deductible for their care based on their income.

The law established two categories, "mandatory" and "discretionary," for VA medical center, nursing home, and outpatient care. The eligibility assessment will be completed and applies to all nonservice-connected veterans regardless of age, except for the following groups: former prisoners of war, veterans requiring care for a condition that may be related to exposure to certain herbicides while serving in Vietnam and to ionizing radiation in connection with atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons, or in the occupation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, veterans receiving a VA pension, veterans of WWI, the Spanish-American War and Mexican Border period, and veterans eligible for Medicaid. Outpatient medical care may also be available.

VA has also begun use of mobile vans for providing medical services to veterans living in remote areas.

## READJUSTMENT COUNSELING

Many vet centers in the Veterans Health Administration's Readjustment Counseling Service are actively engaged in providing psychological counseling services to Native American Vietnam veterans, and veterans of the Persian Gulf War, and conflicts in Lebanon, Grenada, and Panama. Services also include outreach, networking, coordination of services with other providers (native and non-native), educational presentations to local veterans groups, information exchange between vet center staff and Native American service providers, and providing individual and group readjustment counseling on Native American reservations.

## DEATH BENEFITS

Native American Veterans may be buried in a VA national cemetery, along with spouses and minor children. These veterans are eligible for a plot allowance and those receiving disability compensation or pension payments also are eligible for burial allowances. VA will furnish a flag and a headstone or marker to mark the grave of any veteran buried in a national, state or private cemetery.



## EMPLOYMENT

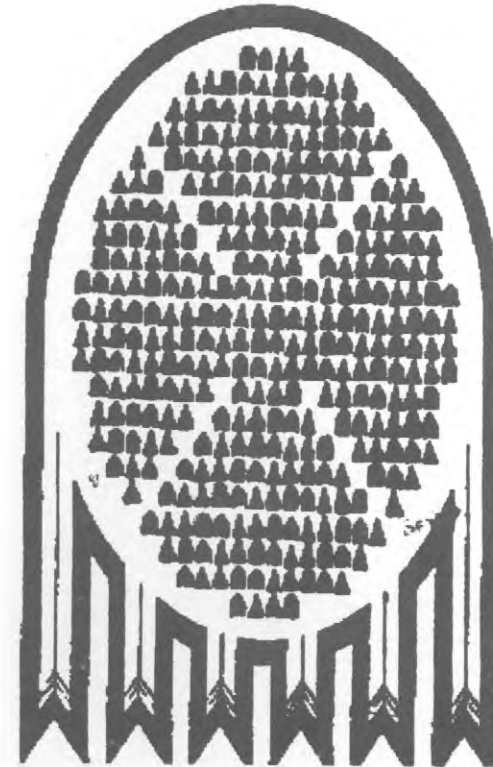
There are various benefits available to Native American veterans and their dependents which are not administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. While there is no law which authorized hiring preference to Native Americans for appointment to positions in VA, veterans' preference and affirmative action outreach efforts to target racial and ethnic minority groups, including Native Americans, are integral aspects of VA employment practices.

The principal hiring preference statute for Native Americans is Section 12 of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, which established preference for the employment of qualified Native Americans in the Department of Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Department of Health and Human Services' Indian Health Service. For more information, contact either of these Departments.

Assistance in finding jobs is also provided to Native American veterans through State employment job service local offices throughout the country. The local Veterans Employment Representatives provide functional supervision of job counseling, testing, and employment referral and placement services provided to veterans. Priority in referral to job openings and training opportunities is given to eligible veterans, with preferential treatment for disabled veterans. In addition, the job service assists veterans who are seeking employment by providing information about job marts, on-the-job and apprenticeship opportunities, etc., in cooperation with VA regional offices and vet centers.

Native American veterans should apply for this kind of help at their nearest local State employment service/job service office.

How to obtain VA benefits: Benefits are not automatically available. For specific eligibility information, contact the nearest VA regional office or VA medical center. Look under U.S. Government, Department of Veterans Affairs, in telephone directories. Toll-free service is available in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.



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