

# VA Benefits Definitions and “What are Benefits, Who is Eligible and How Do I Apply - Attachment A

 **Definition:** *Service-connected (SC) disability compensation* is a monthly payment made because of disability

- resulting from an injury or disease incurred or aggravated
  - in active service, and
  - in line of duty (which includes disabilities that are *not* the result of alcohol or drug abuse)
- presumed by law to be related to military service, or
- resulting from other limited circumstances, such as disability that is the result of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitalization or medical treatment, per [38 U.S.C. 1151](#).

 **Definition:** *Veterans Pension* is a benefit paid to a Veteran who

- is permanently and totally disabled
  - as determined by VA, or
  - as determined by the Social Security Administration
- is in a nursing home for long-term care, as a presumption of disability, or
- has reached the age of 65 years.

Eligibility requires meeting certain service requirements pertaining to length of service and service during a period of war, and certain income and net worth limitations.

 **Definition:** **General Policy Regarding Additional Allowance for Dependents**

An additional allowance for a spouse and children may be paid to Veterans who are receiving payments for compensation evaluated at 30 percent or more or for pension.

Payments for an unmarried child can continue

- until the child reaches age
  - 18, or
  - 23, if the child continues in an approved school, or
- indefinitely if the child becomes incapable of self-support prior to age 18.

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## **Definition: Allowance for Dependent Parents**

Veterans in receipt of compensation evaluated at 30 percent or more may also receive an additional allowance for dependent parents.

## **Definition: The A&A Benefit and Entitlement**

The Aid and Attendance (A&A) allowance is

- part of special monthly compensation (SMC) or special monthly pension (SMP), and
- paid because a person, due to mental or physical disability, requires the regular aid and attendance of another person in conducting the basic activities of daily living, such as
  - bathing
  - dressing, and
  - going to the bathroom.

### ***Entitlement:***

Entitlement to the A&A allowance extends to the Veteran, spouse, surviving parent(s), or surviving spouse.

## **Definition: The Housebound Benefit and Entitlement**

The Housebound allowance is

- part of SMC or SMP, and
- paid because a person, due to a mental or physical disability, is very limited in his/her ability to leave home.

## **Definition: Veterans Hospitalized at Government Expense**

A Veteran who is entitled to A&A and who is hospitalized at government expense can only receive the Housebound rate until released from the hospital.

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## **Definition: Specially Adapted Housing and Special Housing Adaptation Grants**

***Specially adapted housing and special housing adaptation grants*** assist Veterans with certain SC disabilities severely affecting vision or locomotion in

- adapting a presently owned home, or
- acquiring or building a residence adapted with special features.

**References:** For more information about specially adapted housing and special housing adaptation grants, see

## **Definition: Automobile or Other Conveyance Allowance**

***Automobile or other conveyance allowance*** is a *one-time* benefit of financial assistance toward the purchase price of a vehicle when a Veteran has one of the following SC disabilities:

- loss or permanent loss of use of one or both
  - feet, or
  - hands
- permanent impairment of vision of both eyes to a prescribed degree
- a severe burn injury, or
- amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).

**Note:** Necessary adaptive equipment may be certified for the initial vehicle *and* for subsequent vehicles.

**References:** For more information about automobile or other conveyance allowance and adaptive equipment, see

## **Definition: Clothing Allowance**

***Clothing allowance*** is an annual lump-sum payment made when

- a Veteran's SC disability causes the use of certain prosthetic or orthopedic appliances (including a wheelchair) that tend to wear or tear clothing, or
- the use of physician-prescribed medication for an SC skin condition causes irreparable damage to outer garments.

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### **Definition: Vocational Rehabilitation Under 38 U.S.C. 31**

**Vocational rehabilitation** under [38 U.S.C. 31](#) provides subsistence allowance as well as other services and assistance necessary for an eligible Veteran with compensable SC disabilities to

- achieve maximum independence in daily living, and
- obtain and maintain suitable employment.

### **Definition: *Dependency and Indemnity Compensation* (DIC) is a monthly payment made**

- to a surviving spouse, child, or parent because of a service-connected death that occurred after December 31, 1956
- to a surviving spouse or child because the Veteran had been rated as totally disabled due to an SC disability prior to his/her death, typically for at least ten years, per [38 U.S.C. 1318](#)
- to a surviving spouse, child, or parent because of death due to VA medical treatment, per [38 U.S.C. 1151](#), or
- because a surviving spouse, child, or parent elects DIC in the case of an SC death that occurred before January 1, 1957.


### **Definition: *Survivors Pension* is a benefit paid to a surviving spouse or child because of a Veteran's NSC death.**

Basic eligibility requires meeting certain service requirements pertaining to length of service and service during a period of war, and certain income and net worth limitations.

### **Definition: *Death compensation* is a monthly payment made because of an SC death occurring before January 1, 1957.**

**Note:** Generally, new entitlement to this benefit can no longer be established since the Veteran must have died prior to 1957, see [M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 2.A.2.a](#).

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 **Definition:** *Accrued benefits* are benefits that are due to the beneficiary based on an existing decision on a claim for benefits or evidence in the Veteran's claims folder at the date of death, but not paid prior to death.

 **Definition: Entitlement of Surviving Spouses to Additional DIC or Survivors Pension for Children**

Surviving spouses are entitled to additional DIC or Survivors Pension for the Veteran's children.

Payments for an unmarried child can continue

- until the child reaches age
  - 18, or
  - 23, if the child continues in an approved school, or
- indefinitely if the child becomes incapable of self-support prior to age 18.

 **Definition: Payments to Children over Age 18**

The table below explains how benefits are paid for children over age 18.

<b>For this type of benefit ...</b>	<b>Payments ...</b>
DIC	are always made directly to the child, unless he/she is incompetent.
Survivors Pension	can be made directly to the child (or his/her fiduciary) <i>if</i> there is no surviving spouse.

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## A little more information regarding Service Connected Disability Compensation

### Benefits:

Disability compensation is a monthly tax-free benefit paid to Veterans who are at least 10% disabled because of injuries or diseases that were incurred in or aggravated during active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training. A disability can apply to physical conditions, such as a chronic knee condition, as well as a mental health conditions, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

### Benefit

The benefit amount is graduated according to the degree of the Veteran's disability on a scale from 10 percent to 100 percent (in increments of 10 percent). Compensation may also be paid for disabilities that are considered related or secondary to disabilities occurring in service and for disabilities presumed to be related to circumstances of military service, even though they may arise after service. Generally, the degrees of disability specified are also designed to compensate for considerable loss of working time from exacerbations or illnesses.

If you have dependents, an additional allowance may be added if your combined disability is rated 30% or greater. Your compensation may be offset if you receive military retirement pay, disability severance pay, or separation incentive payments. More information about disability compensation benefit amounts can be found on the [Compensation Rates page](#).

### Eligibility

- Service in the Uniformed Services on active duty, **OR**
- Active duty for training, **OR**
- Inactive duty training, **AND**
- You were discharged under other than dishonorable conditions, **AND**
- You are at least 10% disabled by an injury or disease that was incurred in or aggravated during active duty or active duty for training, or inactive duty training

**Note:** If you were on inactive duty for training, the disability must have resulted from injury, heart attack, or stroke.

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## Evidence Required

- Medical evidence of a current physical or mental disability, **AND**
- Evidence of a relationship between your disability and an injury, disease, or event in military service. Medical records or medical opinions are required to establish this relationship.

**Note:** Under certain circumstances, VA may conclude that certain current disabilities were caused by service, even if there is no specific evidence proving this in your particular claim. The cause of a disability is presumed for the following Veterans who have certain diseases.

## Presumed Disability

- Former prisoners of war
- Veterans who have certain chronic or tropical diseases that become evident within a specific period of time after discharge from service
- Veterans who were exposed to ionizing radiation, mustard gas, or Lewisite while in service
- Veterans who were exposed to certain herbicides, such as by serving in Vietnam
- Veterans who served in Southwest Asia during the Gulf War

## Example 1

During a weekend drill, an Army Reservist injures her knee while participating in a physical training class. She is eligible for compensation for residuals of the knee injury.

## Example 2

An individual enlisted in the U.S. Navy on June 10, 1988, and served for a period of 3 years. He was honorably discharged on June 9, 1991. During his active duty, he fell from a bunk and injured his back. Based on his active service, he is entitled to service-connected benefits for the residuals of his back injury.

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### **How to Apply**

- Apply online using [eBenefits](#), **OR**
- Work with an accredited [representative or agent](#), **OR**
- Go to a VA regional office and have a VA employee assist you. You can find your regional office on our [Facility Locator page](#)

For more information on how to apply and for tips on making sure your claim is ready to be processed by VA, visit VA's [How to Apply page](#).

**As with all Benefit Programs – there are exceptions and no two cases are the same. Therefore, the information provided in this article is only a reference.**