

MODULE #19 SPECIAL BENEFITS

DATE STARTED: _____ **LOCATION:** _____

SERVICE OFFICER/TRAINEE SIGNATURE: _____

TRAINER SIGNATURE: _____

DATE COMPLETED _____

I. Please rate the effectiveness of this training module.

Objective		Acceptable	Marginal	Unacceptable
Knowledge of Clothing Allowance.	Objective Achieved			
	Applied objective content through practical exercises			
	Effectiveness of teaching methods used			
Objective				
Knowledge of Auto & housing grants to include HISA grants.	Objective Achieved			
	Applied objective content through practical exercises			
	Effectiveness of teaching methods used			
Objective				
Knowledge of ChampVA Benefits.	Objective Achieved			
	Applied objective content through practical exercises			
	Effectiveness of teaching methods used			
Objective				
Knowledge of Spina Bifida Benefits.	Objective Achieved			
	Applied objective content through practical exercises			
	Effectiveness of teaching methods used			
Objective				
Informal Claims	Objective Achieved			
	Applied objective content through practical exercises			
	Effectiveness of teaching methods used			
Objective				
Fiduciary/Guardianship	Objective achieved			
	Applied objective content through practical exercises			
	Effectiveness of teaching methods used			
Objective				
I.D. Cards	Objective achieved			
	Applied objective content through practical exercises			
	Effectiveness of teaching methods used			

MODULE # 19 CONTINUED

Objective		Acceptable	Marginal	Unacceptable
Knowledge of Small Business Loans	Objective Achieved			
	Applied objective content through practical exercises			
	Effectiveness of methods used			
Objective				
Knowledge of Social Security.	Objective Achieved			
	Applied objective content through practical exercises			
	Effectiveness of methods used			
Objective				
References & how to use them.	Objective Achieved			
	Applied objective content through practical exercises			
	Effectiveness of methods used			

SUBJECTIVE EVALUATION

	Good	Fair	Poor
1. Please rate the extent to which you met your personal objective for this module			
2. Rate the information provided in the Training Manual & other reference materials			
3. Please evaluate the physical environment where the training was held.			
4. Is there anything that we could have done to make this training better for you? (Please comment)			

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SPECIAL BENEFITS

Objective: To learn about the additional special benefits available to disabled veterans and their families.

References:

Title 38, U.S. Code, Chapters 11, 17, 21, and 39.

38 Code of Federal Regulations Part 3, §§ 3.808–3.814; Part 17, §§ 17.1151, 17.153, and 17.900 – 17.905

Adjudication Manual 21-1MR, Part 6 and 9; Appendix B

VA Pamphlet Federal Benefits for Veterans and Survivors

VA Pamphlets 26-69-1, 26-13, CHAMPVA Handbook, CHAMPVA Pamphlet—MEDS BY MAIL

Instructions: Study the assigned reference materials to learn the various special benefits available to veterans and their dependents; and how to assist a veteran or other eligible person to apply for them.

Summary:

I. General:

A wide range of special services and benefits available to veterans and their dependents from various Federal, State, and Foreign Governments. Benefits can be in the form of monetary grants for alteration and/or adaptation of a home or automobile to accommodate a disability, service award replacement or issue military base privileges, employment and business related assistance, increased Social Security Benefits, non-VA housing assistance, health care for dependents, and VA assigned Fiduciaries for VA benefits. The qualification for some of these benefits need not necessarily be based on disability, or that a disability be service-connected ones.

Service Officers may only need to have a basic understanding of non-VA related benefits if the applicant is best assisted by a representative of the agency offering the benefit. In such cases, Service Officers should have a sufficient understanding of the available benefits to advise a person on the existence of these programs, knowledge of an appropriate point of contact, and provide this information to the applicant.

Appliances and devices available include, but are not limited to, artificial limbs, braces, orthopedic shoes, hearing aids, and wheelchairs. These may all be furnished as a necessary part of any medical care, whether inpatient or outpatient, which the veteran is eligible to receive and is receiving. Once issued, such appliances or devices may be repaired or replaced by VA, as necessary. In addition, if wearing of special clothing is made necessary by such appliances, the clothing may be purchased, made, or repaired by VA or at VA expense. All such items are provided by the Prosthetics and Sensory Aids Service at the VA Medical Center having jurisdiction for the veteran's area of residence, upon application and determination of feasibility and need. This will usually be based upon a written order or request from the veteran's treating physician. VA will also provide necessary training in the use of the appliances and devices. (This is not to be confused with all assistive devices, which are commonly used for auditory rehabilitation which takes the place of, or are used in conjunction with, a hearing aid, e.g. telephone amplifiers, amplified headsets, etc., that may be provided to eligible veterans.)

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VA will provide invalid lifts for certain veterans who have been determined to be in need of regular aid and attendance, whether service-connected or for special monthly pension. The qualifying disability on which such need is based is anatomical loss or loss of use of both lower extremities plus the loss of use at least one upper extremity, together with a medical determination that as a result, the veteran is incapable of transferring from the bed to a wheelchair or back without the aid of an attendant, and a lift is a feasible means for accomplishing such transfers. In addition, the veteran may be furnished other therapeutic and rehabilitative devices, including medical equipment and supplies (but not medications), which are determined to be medically necessary.

Veterans who are service-connected for hearing loss, and who are rated 80% or more for such hearing loss, may be furnished assistive devices including tele-captioning decoders to help overcome their hearing handicap.

Blind veterans who are entitled to compensation for any service-connected disability (the blindness need not be service-connected) may be furnished a trained guide dog and/or mechanical or electronic blind aid equipment as appropriate. VA will furnish the training, and will also provide for the period of adjustment to the guide dog, including the expenses of travel, food and lodging if the veteran is required to be away from his or her usual place of residence during this period of adjustment.

II. Clothing allowance:

In addition to the goods and services listed above, VA also provides certain monetary benefits to qualified disabled veterans: If a veteran has a service-connected condition which requires the wearing or use of an orthopedic or prosthetic appliance (including a wheelchair) which tends to tear or wear out clothing, or has a service-connected skin condition and uses medication for it that tends to stain or otherwise damage the clothing, an annual clothing allowance is payable upon application to the VA Medical Center in your respective area. If the veteran is service-connected for anatomical loss or loss of use of one or more extremities, the allowance is automatically authorized after the initial application. In all other cases, the Prosthetics and Sensory Aids Service at the VA Medical Center must certify whether the veteran has a qualifying disability, and if so, whether the need for the orthopedic or prosthetic device or the medication for the skin condition is permanent. If the Prosthetics and Sensory Aids Service determines that the need is permanent, the allowance is automatically paid thereafter; if the need is not shown to be permanent, the veteran must reapply for the clothing allowance each year. Clothing allowance is paid during the month of August.

III. Automobile and Special Adaptive Equipment:

If a veteran is entitled to compensation (or would be entitled to compensation but for receipt of military retired pay) because of the anatomical loss or loss of use of one or both hands, or one or both feet, or because of defective vision in both eyes, with best vision in the better eye no better than 20/200, VA will pay an amount towards the purchase of an automobile or other conveyance plus any necessary special adaptive equipment to allow the veteran to safely and effectively operate the automobile or other conveyance.

This is a one-time payment only. The Prosthetics and Sensory Aids Service at the VA Medical Center may also authorize special adaptive equipment for veterans who are service-connected for complete ankylosis of one or both hips or one or both knees, as well as adaptive equipment for subsequent vehicles for any veteran with any of the above disabilities. *The special adaptive*

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equipment may be repaired, reinstalled, or replaced as necessary; however, a veteran may not be authorized adaptive equipment for more than two vehicles at a time or during any four-year period, except for unusual circumstances beyond the veteran's control.

IV. Special Housing Assistance:

A veteran may qualify for a Special Adapted Housing grant not to exceed \$50,000 if he or she is service-connected and rated permanently totally disabled based on any of the following disabilities or combinations:

- Anatomical loss or loss of use of both lower extremities, such as to preclude locomotion without the aid of braces, canes, crutches, or a wheelchair;
- Blindness of both eyes, having only light perception, plus anatomical loss or loss of use of one lower extremity;
- Anatomical loss or loss of use of one lower extremity plus residuals of organic disease or injury which so affect the functions of balance or propulsion as to preclude locomotion without the aid of braces, canes, crutches, or a wheelchair; or
- Anatomical loss or loss of use of one lower extremity together with anatomical loss or loss of use of one upper extremity which so affect the functions of balance or propulsion as to preclude locomotion without the aid of braces, canes, crutches, or a wheelchair.

This grant may be used to buy, build, or alter and adapt a home for the purpose of making it wheelchair-accessible under applicable guidelines. This is a one-time grant, except as noted below. If the veteran also has Loan Guaranty entitlement available and meets credit-worthiness and other criteria, an additional direct loan of up to \$33,000 may be authorized by VA to help defray the costs of buying, building, or modifying the home.

If the veteran does not qualify for the Special Adapted Housing grant, a Special Home Adaptation grant not to exceed \$10,000 is available for veterans who are entitled to service-connected compensation for permanent and total disability based either on blindness in both eyes, with vision of 5/200 or less, or anatomical loss or loss of use of both hands. This is also a one-time grant. If the veteran has been previously found eligible for the Special Adapted Housing grant, the Special Home Adaptation grant may not be authorized; however, a veteran who is eligible for the Special Home Adaptation grant may later be authorized a Special Adapted Housing grant if additional qualifying disability arises. If the veteran qualifies for both grants, only the Special Adapted Housing grant may be authorized. In any event, no particular type of adaptation, improvement, or structural alteration may be provided the veteran more than once.

If the veteran does not qualify under either of the above programs but nonetheless needs assistance with alteration of his or her home to make it wheelchair-accessible or for other special needs, he or she may qualify for a grant under the Home Improvement and Structural Alteration (HISA) program administered by the Prosthetics and Sensory Aids Service at the VA Medical Center. This program does not require that the qualifying disability be service-connected, but there is a difference in the amount of the grant for a service-connected disability (\$4,100) or a nonservice-connected disability (\$1,200).

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V. Health Care Coverage for Dependents of Totally Disabled Veterans:

In addition to the special benefits for veterans, VA will also provide health care insurance coverage for the dependents or survivors of certain totally disabled (whether rated 100% or by reason of individual unemployability) veterans under the Civilian Health and Medical Program, VA (CHAMPVA). For eligibility under this program, the veteran-sponsor must:

- Be rated permanently totally disabled from service-connected disability;
- Have died on active duty, in line of duty;
- Have died from a service-connected disability; or
- Have been rated service-connected and permanently totally disabled at the time of death from any cause not willful misconduct.

Eligible persons include the veteran's spouse or surviving spouse, minor children under age 18, children between the ages of 18 and 23 who are attending an approved school, and children over age 18 who have been determined to be permanently incapable of self-support ("helpless"). Dependents of retired or other military personnel who are eligible for health care coverage under TRICARE (formerly called CHAMPUS) are not eligible for coverage under CHAMPVA. With the implementation of the CHAMPVA for life program, begun October 2001, persons who turn age 65 do not lose eligibility to the CHAMPVA program as long as they continue to carry the Medicare Part B coverage. Claimant's who have insurance coverage other than Medicare Parts A & B, will have to complete the required form to inform CHAMPVA. At that time CHAMPVA will pay as a tertiary provider. CHAMPVA will cover most health care services and supplies that are considered medically or psychologically necessary. In general, a covered person under CHAMPVA may seek treatment from any licensed health care provider at any licensed medical facility, including from many VA medical facilities. CHAMPVA administration, including applications and claims, is centralized to the VA Health Administration Center, Denver, Colorado.

The CHAMPVA Meds By Mail Program allows eligible CHAMPVA members to obtain their prescriptions via a mail order pharmacy service at no cost to the beneficiary (co-payments are waived). To participate in Meds By Mail, have a physician write a new prescription for a 90-day supply plus refills (not to exceed one "1" year). Attach the original prescriptions to a completed Meds By Mail order form and mail to the Cheyenne, Wyoming CHAMPVA processing center. The Meds By Mail service uses Generic Substitutes and cannot honor name brand requests. Refill requests must be returned no later than 21 days before the current supply expires.

Send original benefit applications & change of dependent status data to:

Department of Veterans Affairs Health Administration Center
CHAMPVA-Eligibility
P.O. Box 469028
Denver, CO 80206-9028
(800) 733-8387

Send applications and prescriptions for Meds By Mail to:

Meds by Mail
VISN7/Dublin
P.O. Box 9000
Dublin, GA 31040
Phone Number (866) 229-7389

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Use these addresses and zip codes in filing claims:

For new (less than one year old) health care claims:

VA Administration Center
CHAMPVA
P.O. Box 65024
Denver, CO 80206-9024

For general questions of if you need to file a claim for reimbursement for health care and the claim is older than one year:

VA Health Administration Center
CHAMPVA
P.O. Box 65023
Denver, CO 80206-9023

For considerations and appeals:

VA Health Administration Center
Appeals
P.O. Box 460948
Denver, CO 80204

Web Address:

www.va.gov/hac (to download "meds by mail forms")

*Note: Service hours are M-F, 8:00 AM-3:00 PM (Mountain Time)

Factors that impact CHAMPVA eligibility for a spouse include:

- Termination of marriage (as of midnight on the effective date)
- Marriage annulment (as of midnight on the effective date)
- Remarriage of a surviving spouse (as of midnight on the effective date)
- Eligibility for TRICARE or TRICARE For Life

Factors that impact CHAMPVA eligibility for a CHILD include:

- Reaching 18 years of age or age 23 if a full-time student (as of midnight on the birth date)
- No longer a Full-Time student after age 18 (as of midnight on the birth date)
- Marriage (as of midnight on the effective date)
- Eligibility for TRICARE (as of midnight on the effective date)
- Stepchild is no longer a member of the sponsor's household

VI. Spina Bifida Allowance:

VA will pay a special monthly allowance to or for a natural child of a Vietnam veteran, conceived after the date the veteran first served in Vietnam, if the child is suffering from spina bifida. This allowance is the first time VA has authorized disability benefits for a dependent who has been

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disabled by the veteran's service. The current age or marital status of the child is not relevant to this allowance, and receipt of this allowance has no bearing on any other VA benefit payable to or for the child based on the child's relationship to the veteran. For purposes of this benefit, the term "spina bifida" means all forms and manifestations of spina bifida except spina bifida occulta. If both of the natural parents are Vietnam veterans, only one allowance is payable to or for the affected child. However, multiple allowances may be paid if a Vietnam veteran has more than one natural child, each of whom was conceived after the veteran served in Vietnam, who suffers from spina bifida.

Application for the allowance is made by submitting a completed VA Form 21-0304, *Application for Spina Bifida Benefits*, together with appropriate supporting medical evidence to show that the child has spina bifida and the severity of the condition. Child will be assigned his/her own VA File Number, separate from Veteran. Payment will be based on three levels of disability, from Level I (able to ambulate unassisted, with minimal to mild impairment of functioning or intellect) to Level III (grossly impaired, non-ambulatory, severely mentally retarded, and/or completely incontinent of bladder and bowel). The rates of payment for each level are set out in Adjudication Manual 21-1, Appendix B. If the supporting medical evidence is not adequate to show the child's level of disability, a rating of Level I will be assigned and a VA examination scheduled for a definitive assessment. Infants under one year of age at time of application will be rated as Level I unless the medical evidence shows neurological deficits of such severity as to warrant an immediate rating at Level III. In either event, the level of disability will be reassessed when the child is one year of age. Children between the ages of 5 and 21 will be periodically reassessed, at intervals not greater than five years, until they reach age 21. After age 21, VA will not further reassess the level of disability unless there is evidence of material change in the severity of the child's condition, or evidence that the current rating may be incorrect.

In addition to payment of the special monthly allowance to or for an eligible child suffering from spina bifida, VA will also provide all necessary treatment for the spina bifida and any conditions directly arising from or because of it. Treatment will be furnished by VA, either directly or under contract with an approved health care provider. Other arrangements for the child's spina bifida-related care may also be honored, provided they are authorized in advance. In these cases, the authorization is issued by the Health Administration Center in Denver, Colorado; claims for payment are handled on the same basis as claims under the CHAMPVA program.

Service Awards, Medal & Decorations (U.S. Government)

Veterans or a deceased veteran's legal next of kin, may apply to the U.S. Government for a one time replacement set of the veteran's service awards, medals, decorations and certain devices (i.e. Rifle Marksmanship Badge or Combat Infantryman Badge) to which entitlement exists. The U.S. Government will only replace those items that were awarded by the Federal Government during the veteran's service period or those awards that were authorized at a later date to which the veteran's service records would establish entitlement. To apply the veteran (or next of kin) submits a completed SF 180 with copies of the veteran's separation or discharge record (other military documents may be submitted if they appear relevant to the request, i.e. a copy of the Certificate for award of the Purple Heart if the discharge does not show the award) to the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, MO. The NPRC staff will verify the existing service records and forward the application to the appropriate branch of service. The specific service branch will review the records and replace only those awards that are allowed by regulation. This may result in a veteran not receiving a certain device even though entitlement exists. The replacement set does not include any service branch insignia, collar insignia, rank insignia, or unit patches. This process may take considerable time and applicants should be

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made aware of this fact when submitting the original SF 180. Do not submit a SF 180 requesting copies of any service records and a replacement of set of awards, as NPRC may not process both at the same time causing further delay.

State Issued Awards

Certain States have issued awards and medals to the veterans of that state for various periods of wartime service. North Carolina has only issued one such medal to Commemorate Service of North Carolina residents in WWI. A North Carolina War Service Medal was established in 1991 by G.S. 143B-399; however, the State Government did not fund the program and instead opted for a private funding to off set the cost of production. Applications are not being accepted for this medal pending resolution of this funding issue. Applications for awards issued by other States must be directed to that specific State's Government Agency with authority to issue the award.

Foreign Government Awards, Medals & Decorations

In certain instances, Foreign Governments will authorize the issuance of an award to U.S. Service Members for wartime service performed in that nation or in support of that nation. These awards may be in the form of a Certificate, Commemorative Medal, or Decoration. In every case the veteran (or next of kin) must submit a copy of the separation or discharge document with the appropriate application. Some Foreign awards may never be replaced by that Government (i.e. Vietnam Service Medals) and the applicant will have to purchase the item from a Retail Supplier as their own expense. The NPRC will send a list of reputable suppliers for such items if requested.

Fiduciary & Field Examination (Guardianship) Unit

The VARO "Guardianship" unit is primarily involved in the establishment of payees (fiduciaries) for veterans, surviving spouses, dependant parents, and adult helpless children (AHCs), who have been determined incapable of responsibly handling their VA benefits, as well as for certain minor beneficiaries. It also conducts investigations involving claims and possible misuse of VA Funds.

Requirements To Establish A Payee:

1. Guardianship rates the beneficiary incompetent:
 - a. VA obtains medical evidence supporting incompetence
 - b. Unit advises the beneficiary proposing to establish a payee (Due Process)
 - c. Unit allows 60 days before the incompetence rating process begins, unless the beneficiary replies requesting a personal hearing, or indicates, in writing, that they have no objection to the appointment of a fiduciary
 - d. When the incompetency rating is effected by the VARO, the Unit will establish a fiduciary
 - e. Unit assigns case to a Field Examiner for investigation. The case must be completed within 45 calendar days of the Field Examination
 2. Beneficiary has a legal disability (i.e. has been adjudicated incompetent by a court to handle their affairs). VARO obtains certified copies of the Court ordered Guardianship. VARO requests Unit establish a fiduciary. No Due Process is needed.
- Field Examiner's Options Upon Receipt of Assignment