

Which Veterans Are Eligible For VA Health Care?

By Jennifer Langlois and Nick Benzinger

The answer to this question is not simple. There are many factors that can impact whether or not a veteran is eligible to enroll in and use the VA Health Care system. Some of the many factors that can affect a veteran's access to VA Health Care include: How long a veteran served, where and when they served, the character of their discharge/release, whether they were injured or wounded during service and whether they were exposed to certain toxic substances while in service. This article will attempt to clarify VA Health Care eligibility requirements. **Also – can use VA website decision tree that takes you through step by step.** <http://hbexplorer.vacloud.us/>

The first thing to do to determine your BASIC ELIGIBILITY. If you served in the active military service and were separated under any condition other than dishonorable, you *might* qualify for VA health care benefits. Current and former members of the Reserves or National Guard who were called to active duty by a federal order and completed the full period for which they were called or ordered to active duty may be eligible for VA health benefits as well. However, please note that Reserves or National Guard members with active duty for training purposes *only* do **not** meet the basic eligibility requirement.

So you've determined that you pass the basic eligibility requirements. Unfortunately, there is not adequate funding to provide health care to all veterans who meet these basic eligibility requirements. Therefore the VA has to enroll veterans based on a system of

Enhanced Eligibility If any of the following are true of your service you have a higher chance of being eligible to enroll in VA Health Care.

- Are a Former **Prisoner of War (POW)**
- In receipt of the Purple Heart Medal.
- In receipt of the Medal of Honor.
- Have a compensable VA awarded service-connected disability of 10% or more.
- In receipt of a VA Pension.
- Were discharged from the military because of a disability (not preexisting), early out, or hardship.
- Served in a Theater of Operations for 5 years post discharge.
- Served in the Republic of Vietnam from January 9, 1962 to May 7, 1975. Including serving on some U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships associated with military service in Vietnam.
- Served in the Persian Gulf from August 2, 1990 to November 11, 1998.
- Were stationed or resided at Camp Lejeune for 30 days or more between August 1, 1953 and December 31, 1987.
- Are found by VA to be Catastrophically Disabled.
- Previous years' household income is below VA's National Income or Geographical-Adjusted Income Thresholds.