

Obtaining a Veteran ID in Wisconsin

by Jennifer Langlois

Being a veteran can bring perks such as exclusive discounts and special services from businesses, but very often obtaining these perks requires showing proof of service. One way to prove veteran status is to present a discharge paper (form DD214), which all veterans receive when separating from the military. However, carrying this document around is both impractical and an identity-theft risk. Luckily, in Wisconsin there are several options to obtain an identification card that provides proof of military service.

These options are:

- 1) Requesting the State of Wisconsin Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), put a veteran identifier (the word Veteran) on driver's license/state ID card.
- 2) Applying online at [vets.gov](https://www.vets.gov) for a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) issued Veterans Identification Card (VIC).
- 3) Enrolling in the VA Health Care System.

For Wisconsin residents, option one is probably the quickest and easiest option with few eligibility requirements (*requirements are: two years active duty during peacetime or 90 days during wartime, and an honorable discharge*). It also has the added benefit of eliminating the need to carry a second/separate ID. Before a veteran goes to the DMV to get the veteran identifier on their driver license or state ID card they need to verify eligibility with the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs. They can do this by contacting the Veterans Benefits Resource Center at: 1-800-WIS-VETS or by contacting the local County Veteran Service Officer. In Shawano County this is Nick Benzinger at: 715-526-9183, located at: 311 N Main St. Shawano. After establishing eligibility, veterans can go to the Wisconsin DMV to get the identifier put on their license. If renewing a license there is no extra charge but there is a fee if requesting a replacement outside of the renewal dates.

Options two and three are more difficult to use. Option two was experiencing technical difficulties last year and only recently started receiving applications after placing the program on hold for several months. To get the federally issued ID veterans must apply online through **vets.gov**. They must also upload a photo that meets passport-type qualifications. Option three is not open to all veterans and determining eligibility is a longer and more complicated process. However, if a veteran would like to explore these two options the Veteran Service Office is available to answer questions and to veterans through these processes as well.

Having a veteran ID is a safer and more convenient way for veterans to carry proof that they are a veteran than carrying discharge papers and in Wisconsin it is relatively easy to obtain one. Veterans who get one can more easily enjoy using the special offers and discounts available to them!