

## Service-Connected and Non-service-Connected Benefits for Veterans

For soldiers who have done their duty for their country, the Department of Veteran Affairs offers several types of disability benefits. But not all VA benefits are created equal-- the benefits you receive for your disability claim will vary from person to person. The VA uses eight "priority groups" to determine which benefits you will receive, with "1" being the highest priority and "8" the lowest (as of 2003, no new veterans are enrolled into group 8). The level of priority you are given will depend entirely on your disability (and whether it is service- or non-service-connected), your situation financially, and the level or intensity of your disability.

Since whether or not a disability is service-connected or non-service-connected can have a great effect on the benefits you will receive, its important to have a good understanding of the specific requirements for each of these two types of benefits.

### Non-service-Connected Benefits Requirements

A veteran who suffers from a total and permanent disability qualifies for non-Service-connected benefits. Eligibility for non-service-connected benefits also depends on several other factors:

â€¢ Income- Eligibility is based on a veteran having both a limited income and a net worth that does not provide sufficient maintenance. For more information please see 38 U.S.C.S. Â§Â§1521-22.

â€¢ Service - To be eligible for non-service-connected pensions, you must have 90 days of active duty and at least one day in a "period of war." For those enrolled in the military after 1980, however, the requirement is simply a full period of active duty. Specifically, a veteran who was enrolled for the first time after (or on) Sept. 8, 1980 will need to have completed a minimum service period, which should amount to either twenty-four continuous months of active duty or the entire period that individual was called for to active duty. Additionally, the veteran must have active service that includes a total of ninety days during one or more periods of war; ninety or more consecutive days, one day of which is during a period of war; or at least one day of wartime service that results in a discharge for service-connected disability.

â€¢ Discharge- To be eligible for benefits from the Department of Veteran Affairs, your discharge from the military needs to have been under non-dishonorable circumstances.

### The Requirements for Service Connected Benefits

Unlike with non-service-connected benefits, veterans who receive service-connected benefits do not need to be fully disabled, have served during wartime, or meet an income or net worth requirement. Rather, you will be required to prove the source and current condition of your disability using:

â€¢ Proof of your current disability- As service-connected disability benefits are only available to those with current disabilities, the first things applicants must do is provide a current diagnosis of their disability using up-to-date medical records.

â€¢ Evidence of the occurrence of disability or injury- Veterans applying for service-connected benefits must next provide evidence that their current disability was either incurred during or worsened by military service. Veterans should keep in mind, though, that the VA uses the term "in-service" broadly, also including injuries that occurred during leave.

â€¢ Support of the connection between the current disability and the service-connected injury- Veterans applying for service-connected disability benefits must prove that their current disability is indeed connected to the injury which occurred during military service.

## About the Author

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