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NEWS BRIEFS

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Subcommittee Approves Expansion of Vets' Health Reimbursement Eligibility

The House Veterans Affairs Health Subcommittee on March 19 approved a measure that would expand veterans' eligibility to be reimbursed for care they receive in non-Veterans Affairs Department emergency rooms.

An amendment, adopted by voice vote, would allow the VA secretary to provide reimbursement for emergency treatment provided at a non-department facility at any time before the date of enactment.

The Veterans Affairs Economic Opportunity Subcommittee approved five other veterans-related measures, at a separate session Thursday afternoon. One of those bills would establish a scholarship for students pursuing degrees or certificates in medical studies to help the visually impaired.

The measure aims to increase the number of blind rehabilitation specialists who serve at VA hospitals.

VA APPEALS

Veterans have a right to appeal a VA decision on a benefit claim. A veteran has one year from the date of the notification of a VA decision to file an appeal. The veteran may appeal a complete or partial denial of their claim or they may appeal the amount of benefit the VA grants.

For example, if a veteran filed a claim for disability and the VA awarded the veteran a 10% disability, the veteran can appeal the VA's decision if he or she believes the disability rating is too low.

No special form is required to begin the appeal process. All that is required initially from the veteran is a written statement, which is called a Notice of Disagreement.

Veterans can contact their County Veterans Service Office for more information about VA appeals.

Special Compensation Benefits for Eligible Veterans Hospitalized for Service-Connected Disabilities

When a veteran is hospitalized in excess of 21 days for medical treatment of a service-connected disability compensated under VA governing disability regulations the VA will provide a total, or 100 percent, rating for the period.

This benefit will also apply to veterans hospitalized for nonservice-connected medical conditions if during the hospitalization the veteran hospital treatment for a service-connected disability is instituted and continued in excess of 21 days.

Additionally, incarcerated veterans confined to a prison hospital for treatment of a service-connected disability in excess of 21 days may be eligible for this benefit subject to regulations governing the effect of imprisonment on VA benefit payments.

Veteran's VA Financial Benefits Can Be Apportioned by the VA

Under certain circumstances a veteran's VA financial benefits, such as compensation or pension entitlements, may be apportioned on behalf of the veteran's spouse, children, or dependent parents.

Prior to rendering a decision, the VA Regional Office will fully develop the facts as they pertain to all interested parties.

For assistance, please contact your County Veterans Service Office.

Notify VA of an Address Change

Some veterans and their survivors are not receiving the latest VA letters on their benefit changes because they have not maintained their current address with the VA Regional Office.

To ensure that you are kept abreast of all VA benefits, please maintain your current address with the Regional Office.

For assistance in filing a current change of address with the Regional Office please visit or County Veterans Service Office or you may call the Regional Office directly at 1-800-827-1000.