



LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS NEWS

"Serving those who served and sacrificed for America"

March/April 2019



Lexington, SC.

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At a Glance Calendar March/April

<p>For a list of events in Lexington County for March/April</p> <p>Weekly on Tuesdays in March</p> <p>Friday, March 1st</p> <p>Tuesday, March 5th</p> <p>Wednesday, March 6th</p> <p>Friday, March 8th</p> <p>Saturday, March 9th</p> <p>Sunday, March 10th</p> <p>Monday, March 11th thru Friday, March 15th</p> <p>Tuesday, March 12th</p> <p>Sunday, March 17th</p> <p>Wednesday, March 20th</p> <p>Tuesday, March 26th</p> <p>Friday, March 29th</p> <p>Weekly on Tuesdays in April</p> <p>Monday, April 1st</p> <p>Thursday, April 4th</p> <p>Friday, April 5th</p> <p>Tuesday, April 9th</p> <p>Saturday, April 13th</p> <p>Sunday, April 14th</p> <p>Monday, April 15th</p> <p>Friday, April 19th</p> <p>Sunday, April 21st</p> <p>Monday, April 22nd</p> <p>Tuesday, April 23rd</p> <p>Wednesday, April 24th</p> <p>Friday, April 26th</p>	<p>See page 20 - Happenings Around Lexington County</p> <p>Lexington County Veterans Group Meeting from 10am to 12 noon</p> <p>Chapin Outreach</p> <p>Mardi Gras begins</p> <p>Ash Wednesday Gaston Outreach</p> <p>Batesburg/Leesville Outreach</p> <p>Dang-it Doll Workshop - for more information see page 15</p> <p>Daylight Savings Time begins</p> <p>SCACVAO training in Columbia (limited office staff)</p> <p>County Council Meeting</p> <p>St. Patrick's Day</p> <p>First Day of Spring</p> <p>County Council Meeting</p> <p>Veterans Resource Fair - for more information see page 17</p> <p>Lexington County Veterans Group</p> <p>April Fools Day</p> <p>Gaston Outreach</p> <p>Chapin Outreach</p> <p>County Council Meeting</p> <p>Dang-it doll Workshop - for more information see page 15</p> <p>Palm Sunday</p> <p>Tax Day</p> <p>Good Friday</p> <p>Easter Sunday</p> <p>Earth Day</p> <p>County Council Meeting</p> <p>Administrative Professional Day</p> <p>Arbor Day</p>
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From the Director...

Your VA office recently reached a milestone in our new complex. As of February 12th we have been in it for one year. It is an incredible place to work and to serve Veterans. So many of you have complimented us on it and said you were proud to come to an office like ours to get help for VA benefits. We appreciate these great comments!

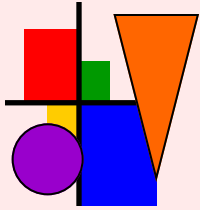
As we move through 2019, the VA is making many changes and most notably on appeals and healthcare. The new appeal law took effect on February 19 and gives a Veteran a new option to appeal straight to a Judge in Washington, D.C. and can expect a decision in one year or less. This drastically improves service to Veterans and trims several years of waiting on an average appeal. Healthcare is working on the caregiving aspect and will implement a program that allows for a Veteran's caregiver to receive a monthly stipend, training, respite care and mental counseling. This has largely only been available to 9/11 Veterans' caregivers but soon will be available to any Veteran that is eligible. More details will be available in 2019. If you have not been to our new office, please drop by for a tour. We would love to show it off!

Enjoying the journey, 

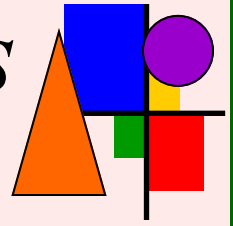
CALENDAR KEY

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|--|--|
| Purple —Holidays/Special Days | Brown —County Council Meetings |
| Blue —Outreach dates | Pink —Special Events throughout the County |
| Red —County Offices Closed, and Special Notices | Orange —Director Out of Office |
| Black —Director's appearances in the County | Green —Lexington County Veterans Group Meetings |





COMPENSATION BENEFITS



Disability compensation is a monthly tax-free benefit paid to Veterans who are at least 10% disabled because of injuries or diseases that were incurred in or aggravated during active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training. A disability can apply to physical conditions, such as a chronic knee condition, as well as mental health conditions, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).



The benefit amount is graduated according to the degree of the Veteran's disability on a scale from 0 to 100 percent (in increments of 10 percent). Compensation may also be paid for disabilities that are considered related or secondary to disabilities occurring in service and for disabilities presumed to be related to circumstances of military service, even though they may arise after service. Generally, the degrees of disability specified are also designed to compensate for considerable loss of working time from exacerbations or illnesses.



If you have dependents, an additional allowance may be added if your combined disability is rated 30% or greater. Your compensation may be offset if you received disability severance pay or separation incentive payments. Military retirement pay for Veterans rated 40% and below, is offset by their VA compensation. Military retirees receiving 50% or higher receive both their VA compensation and full military retirement.

To be eligible for VA compensation, you must meet the following criteria:

1. Service in the Uniformed Services on active duty, OR
2. Active duty for training, OR
3. Inactive duty training, AND
4. You were discharged under other than dishonorable conditions, AND
5. You are at least 10% disabled by an injury or disease that was incurred in or aggravated during active duty or active duty for training, or inactive duty training



Note: If you were on inactive duty for training, the disability must have resulted from injury, heart attack, or stroke.

Evidence required to file a claim includes: Medical evidence of a current physical or mental disability, AND evidence of a relationship between your disability and an injury, disease, or event in military service. Medical records or medical opinions are required to establish this relationship.



Note: Under certain circumstances, VA may conclude that certain current disabilities were caused by service, even if there is no specific evidence proving this in your particular claim. The cause of a disability is presumed for the following Veterans who have certain diseases.

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The VA presumes that specific disabilities diagnosed in certain Veterans groups were caused by their military service. VA does this because of the unique circumstances of their military service. If one of these conditions is diagnosed in a Veteran in one of these groups, the VA presumes that the circumstances of his or her service caused the condition, and disability compensation can be awarded. These Veterans groups are:

1. Former prisoners of war.
2. Veterans who have certain chronic or tropical diseases that become evident within a specific period of time after discharge from service.
3. Veterans who were exposed to ionizing radiation, mustard gas, or Lewisite while in service.
4. Veterans who were exposed to certain herbicides, such as by serving in Vietnam.
5. Veterans who served in Southwest Asia during the Gulf War.

HOW MUCH DOES VA PAY? The amount of basic benefit paid ranges, depending on how disabled you are. Note: You may be paid additional amounts, in certain instances, if:

1. you have very severe disabilities or loss of limb(s).
2. you have a spouse, child(ren), or dependent parent(s).
3. you have a seriously disabled spouse.



How to Apply: Apply online using eBenefits, OR work with an accredited representative or agent, OR go to a VA regional office and have a VA employee assist you, OR call our office for assistance.



No-cost flu shots

for VA-enrolled veterans²
Just walk into your local Walgreens.

**Now through
the end of
March 2019!!**

Spring Forward!

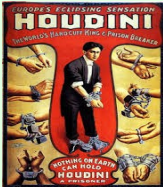
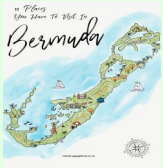
Sunday, March 10th



Daylight Savings Begins

ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Did you know that the following events occurred during the months of March & April?



March 1, 1961 - President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps.

March 3, 1847 - Inventor Alexander Graham Bell was born in Edinburgh, Scotland.

March 6, 1836 - Fort Alamo fell to Mexican troops led by General Santa Anna.

March 10, 1880 - The Salvation Army was founded in the United States.

March 12, 1609 - The island of Bermuda was colonized by the British.

March 14, 1879 - Albert Einstein was born in Ulm, Germany.

March 15, 1767 - Andrew Jackson was born in a log cabin in Waxhaw, South Carolina.

March 19, 2003 - The United States launched an attack against Iraq to topple dictator Saddam Hussein from power.

March 24, 1874 - Harry Houdini was born (as Erik Weisz) in Budapest, Hungary.

April 2, 1513 - Spanish explorer Ponce De Leon sighted Florida and claimed it for the Spanish Crown.

April 3, 1860 - The Pony Express service began as the first rider departed Missouri.

April 4, 1968 - Civil Rights leader Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King was shot and killed by a sniper in Memphis, Tennessee.

April 6, 1896 - After a break of 1500 years, the first Olympics of the modern era was held in Athens, Greece.

April 9, 1865 - After over 500,000 American deaths, the Civil War effectively ended.

April 12, 1861 - The American Civil War began as Confederate troops at 4:30 a.m. fired upon Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina.

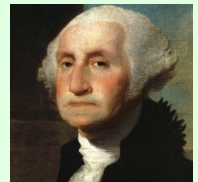
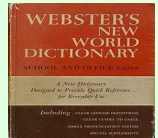
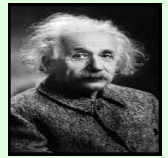
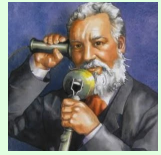
April 14, 1828 - The first dictionary of American-style English was published by Noah Webster.

April 16, 1889 - Film comedian Charlie Chaplin was born in London.

April 19, 1995 - At 9:02 a.m., a massive car-bomb explosion destroyed the entire side of a nine story federal building in Oklahoma City.

April 22, 1864 - "In God We Trust" was included on all newly minted U.S. coins and currency by an Act of Congress.

April 30, 1789 - George Washington became the first U.S. President.



The VA updates disability rating schedule related to hematologic and lymphatic systems

Effective December 9th, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) updated portions of the VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities (VASRD or Rating Schedule) that evaluates the hematologic and lymphatic systems. These federal regulations used by the Veterans Benefits Administration help claims processors evaluate the severity of disabilities and assign disability ratings. One diagnostic code was removed, nine were added, and several were restructured. The complete list of updates to the rating schedule are now available online. Claims pending prior to December 9th, will be considered under both the old and new rating criteria, and whichever criteria is more favorable to the Veteran will be applied. Claims filed on or after December 9th will be rated under the new rating schedule. By updating the rating schedule for conditions related to the hematologic and lymphatic systems, VA claims processors can make more consistent decisions with greater ease and ensure Veterans understand these decisions. The VA remains committed to improving its service to Veterans continuously and staying at the forefront of modern medicine as it has for decades. The VA has issued several VASRD updates since September 2017, including updates for dental and oral conditions, conditions related to the endocrine system, gynecological conditions and disorders of the breast, diseases of the eye and skin conditions.

“Why I Served Series”

Our County Public Information Officer, Harrison Cahill, has started a “Why I Served Series.” He would like to record some video stories of Veterans explaining why they served. If you are interested or know of a Veteran who would be, please call Harrison at (803) 212-5553 or email him at hcahill@lex-co.com to set this up. He records the interviews in our new conference room, where you will have privacy and can take your time in being interviewed. Harrison usually pares down these interviews to three to five minute videos that are shown on the Lexington County Facebook page.



March is National Frozen Foods Month!



April is National Grilled Cheese Month!



Are you a Veteran in crisis or concerned about one?

Connect with the Veterans Crisis Line to reach caring, qualified responders with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Many of them are Veterans themselves.

Call 1-800-273-8255 and press 1 or text 838255.

The Veterans Crisis line is a free, anonymous, confidential resource that's available to anyone, even if you're not registered with the VA or enrolled in VA healthcare. The Veterans Crisis Line does not charge for texting to 838255, but message and data rates may apply.

Special Monthly Compensation

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) program may provide you with benefits in addition to, or instead of, your disability compensation if you have loss (or loss of use of) a limb, sight, speech, hearing, mobility, sexual organ or functioning, or if you have certain other disabilities. You may also be eligible for SMC if you are unable to leave your house or bed without help, or in need of regular help from another person in your daily activities. Extra VA disability or SMC is given for some especially serious disabilities. The basic idea is that the VA wants to give additional disability pay in cases where the disability is so severe that the regular ratings just are not enough.



Unlike disability compensation, which compensates you for lost wages, SMC compensates you for non-economic losses, such as your personal inconvenience and loss of use of a body part, or body system. SMC is one of the most complex VA programs. SMC is difficult to understand and even experts in Veterans' benefits can find it confusing, so you are not alone if you find the SMC program difficult to figure out.

There are different categories that determine the type and amount of SMC. Each one has different requirements for the kind of conditions that qualify for SMC under that category. For a condition to qualify under any category, it must be determined by the VA to be a service connected disability. There are about 60 levels of SMC divided into nine letter categories: "K", "L", "M", "N", "O", "P", "R", "S", and "T". If you get SMC, the VA will tell you which of these categories of SMC you qualify for. Some of the letter categories also have in-between levels, which are shown by a "1/2" symbol after the letter. The 2019 rates for a single Veteran range from \$108.57 to \$8749.09 per month. For a complete listing for the SMC rates visit www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/SMC.

There is some specific terminology relating to SMC benefits. This terminology is explained below.

1 – Loss or Loss of Use is described as either an amputation or, having no effective remaining function of an extremity or organ.

The disabilities VA can consider for SMC include:

- ◇ loss, or loss of use, of a hand or foot
- ◇ immobility of a joint or paralysis
- ◇ loss of sight of an eye (having only light perception)
- ◇ loss, or loss of use, of a reproductive organ
- ◇ complete loss, or loss of use, of both buttocks
- ◇ deafness of both ears (having absence of air and bone conduction)
- ◇ inability to communicate by speech (complete organic aphonia)
- ◇ loss of a percentage of tissue from a single breast, or both breasts, from mastectomy or radiation treatment



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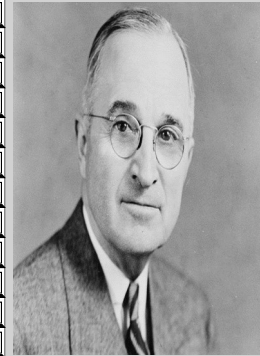
**Special Monthly Compensation
continued from page 7**

2 – Aid and attendance means that the condition is so severe that it requires regular (not necessarily constant) supervision by another person. This person could be a family member, home nurse, or nursing home facility. Hospitalization does NOT qualify as aid and attendance.

3 – Permanently bedridden means that the condition is so severe that the individual cannot get out of bed. This does not include periods of bed rest prescribed by a physician since the individual could still actually get out of bed. Unlike aid and attendance, if an individual is permanently bedridden the rating continues even if they are hospitalized.

The VA will pay higher rates for combinations of these disabilities such as loss or loss of use of the feet, legs, hands, and arms, in specific monetary increments, based on the particular combination of the disabilities. There are also higher payments for various combinations of severe deafness with bilateral blindness. Additional SMC is available if a Veteran is service connected for paraplegia, with complete loss of bowel and bladder control. In addition, if you have other service-connected disabilities that, in combination with the above special monthly compensation, meet certain criteria, a higher amount of SMC can also be considered.

You should contact our office or your local VA regional office for information about applying for SMC. In determining qualifications for SMC, the VA must review the medical evidence regarding the loss or loss of use and then make a decision regarding the level of SMC to be paid.



*It is understanding
that gives us an
ability to have peace.
When we understand
the other fellow's
viewpoint,
and he understands ours,
then we can sit down and work out
our differences.*

- Harry S. Truman



March is ...
National Caffeine Awareness Month



The History of The Salvation Army



The Salvation Army (TSA) is a Protestant Christian church and an international charitable organization. The organization reports a worldwide membership of over 1.7 million, consisting of soldiers, officers and adherents collectively known as Salvationists. It's founders sought to bring salvation to the poor, destitute, and hungry by meeting both their "physical and spiritual needs". They are present in 131 countries, running charity shops, operating shelters for the homeless and disaster relief and humanitarian aid to developing countries.

The Salvation Army was founded in London's East End in 1865 by one-time Methodist Reform Church minister William Booth and his wife Catherine as the East London Christian Mission, and this name was used until 1878. The name "The Salvation Army" developed from an incident where William Booth was dictating a letter to his secretary George Scott Railton and said, "We are a volunteer army." Bramwell Booth heard his father and said, "Volunteer! I'm no volunteer, I'm a regular!" Railton was instructed to cross out the word "volunteer" and substitute the word "salvation". The Salvation Army was modelled after the military, with its own flag and its own hymns. Booth and the other soldiers in "God's Army" would wear the Army's own uniform, for meetings and ministry work. He became the "General" and his other ministers were given appropriate ranks as "officers". Other members became "soldiers".

When William Booth became known as the General, Catherine is known as the "Mother of The Salvation Army". William Booth's early motivation for The Salvation Army was to convert poor Londoners such as prostitutes, gamblers and alcoholics to Christianity, while Catherine spoke to the wealthier people, gaining financial support for their work. She also acted as a religious minister. William Booth described the organization's approach: "The three 'S's' best expressed the way in which the Army administered to the 'down and outs': first, soup; second, soap; and finally, salvation."

In 1880, the Salvation Army started its work in three others countries: Australia, Ireland, and the United States. The corps in New York were founded as a result of the rehabilitation of an individual who had numerous convictions for drunkenness. The Salvation Army's first main converts were alcoholics, morphine addicts, prostitutes and other "undesirables" unwelcome in polite Christian society, which helped prompt the Booths to start their own church. Their soldiers wear a uniform tailored to the country in which they work; the uniform can be white, grey, navy, fawn and are even styled like a sari in some areas. Any member of the public is welcome to attend their meetings.



The Salvationists' nationwide appeals for financial and material donations yielded tremendous support, enabling the Army to provide assistance to thousands. The Salvation Army is a non-governmental relief agency and is usually among the first to arrive with help after natural or man-made disasters. They have worked to alleviate suffering and help people rebuild their lives. In the USA the Salvation Army's first major forays into disaster relief resulted from the tragedies of the Galveston Hurricane of 1900 and the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. They were active after the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, were prominent among relief organizations after Hurricane Hugo and Hurricane Andrew, and they responded to hurricanes Katrina and Rita, to name a few. The Salvation Army was one of the first relief agencies on the scene of the September 11 attacks in New York City in 2001.

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Lexington County Veterans Group

All Honorably Discharged Lexington County Veterans are invited to attend the weekly meetings. The group meets weekly on Tuesdays from 10 am to 12 noon in the auditorium at 605 West Main Street in Lexington. The group meets for Health Issues and PTSD counseling with a licensed counselor.

On the second Tuesday of each month, they meet at a different local restaurant for food and fellowship. Check their website for the location.

The Veterans group also participates in various social activities such as group lunches, group dinners with wives/significant other, boat trips on Lake Murray, participation in the Lexington County Veterans parade and other general group tours.



Veteran Wives Support Group

Meets 1st Friday of each month

2 to 4pm

Crossroads Counseling Center

130A Whiteford Way

Lexington, SC 29072

For further information, please visit their website at lex-coveteransgroup.com or contact our office at 803-785-8400.



Glazed Rainbow Carrots

Ingredients

1 bunch (about 1 1/2 lb.) slender rainbow carrots, trimmed, scrubbed and cut into 1" pieces
4 tbsp. butter, melted
2 tbsp. lemon juice
Snipped chives, for garnish

Directions

Preheat oven to 425°F. Line rimmed baking sheet with foil. Toss carrots with butter, 1/4 teaspoon salt and 1/2 teaspoon pepper; arrange in single layer on prepared baking sheet. Roast 20 to 25 minutes or until tender and browned. Drizzle carrots with lemon juice.

To serve, garnish with chives.

Did you know?

The VA has a new suicide hotline number. It is 1-855-948-2311.

The daffodil symbolizes unequalled love, so giving this flower to someone expresses a deep love that cannot be rivaled or imitated. Certainly, one of the first flowers of spring brings us new beginnings and, as the poet Keats said, "daffodils bring joy forever". With their bright yellow petals, daffodils seen the perfect way to say the sun is always shining whenever your loved one is around.



Presumptive Disabilities

The VA presumes that specific disabilities diagnosed in certain Veterans were caused by their military service. The VA does this because of the unique circumstances of their military service. If one of these conditions is diagnosed in a Veteran in one of these groups, the VA presumes that the circumstances of his or her service caused the condition, and disability compensation can be awarded.

The following diseases and conditions are considered to be part of this program:

Certain chronic and tropical diseases (for example, multiple sclerosis, diabetes mellitus, and arthritis) may be service connected if the disease becomes at least 10% disabling within the applicable time limit following service.

All Veterans who develop Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease, at any time after separation from service may be eligible for compensation for that disability. To be eligible, the Veteran must have served a minimum of 90 consecutive days of active service.

Prisoners of War: For former POWs who were imprisoned for any length of time, the following disabilities are presumed to be service connected if they become at least 10 percent disabling anytime after military service: psychosis, any of the anxiety states, dysthymic disorder, organic residuals of frostbite, post-traumatic osteoarthritis, atherosclerotic heart disease or hypertensive vascular disease and their complications, stroke and its complications, and, effective October 10, 2008, osteoporosis if the Veteran has post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

For former POWs who were imprisoned for at least 30 days: The following conditions are also presumed to be service connected: avitaminosis, beriberi, chronic dysentery, helminthiasis, malnutrition (including optic atrophy associated with malnutrition), pellagra and/or other nutritional deficiencies, irritable bowel syndrome, peptic ulcer disease, peripheral neuropathy except where related to infectious causes, cirrhosis of the liver, and, effective September 28, 2009, osteoporosis.

Veterans Exposed to Radiation: For Veterans who participated in radiation risk activities as defined in VA regulations while on active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training, the following conditions are presumed to be service connected: all forms of leukemia (except for chronic lymphocytic leukemia); cancer of the thyroid, breast, pharynx, esophagus, stomach, small intestine, pancreas, bile ducts, gall bladder, salivary gland, urinary tract (renal pelvis, ureter, urinary bladder and urethra), brain, bone, lung, colon, and ovary; bronchiolo-alveolar carcinoma; multiple myeloma; lymphomas (other than Hodgkin's disease), and primary liver cancer (except if cirrhosis or hepatitis B is indicated).

To determine service connection for other conditions or exposures not eligible for presumptive service connection, the VA considers factors such as the amount of radiation exposure, duration of exposure, elapsed time between exposure and onset of the disease, gender and family history, age at time of exposure, the extent to which a non-service exposure could contribute to disease, and the relative sensitivity of exposed tissue.

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Presumptive Disabilities continued from page 11

Veterans Exposed to Agent Orange and Other Herbicides: A Veteran who served in the Republic of Vietnam between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, is presumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange and other herbicides used in support of military operations.

VA presumes the following diseases to be service-connected for such exposed Veterans:

- AL amyloidosis,
- Chloracne or other acneform disease similar to chloracne,
- Chronic B-cell leukemias (including, but not limited to, hairy-cell leukemia and chronic lymphocytic leukemia)
- Diabetes mellitus (Type 2),
- Hodgkin's disease,
- Ischemic heart disease.
- Multiple myeloma,
- Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma,
- Parkinson's disease,
- Peripheral Neuropathy (acute & subacute; manifested to a degree of 10% or more within a year after last date on which Veteran was exposed to herbicide)
- Porphyria cutanea tarda,
- Prostate cancer,
- Respiratory cancers (lung, bronchus, larynx, trachea),
- Soft-tissue sarcoma (other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or mesothelioma).

Gulf War Veterans with Chronic Disabilities: May receive disability compensation for chronic disabilities resulting from undiagnosed illnesses and/or medically unexplained chronic multi-symptom illnesses defined by a cluster of signs or symptoms. Gulf War Veterans who meet the criteria below do not need to prove a connection between their military service and illnesses in order to receive VA disability compensation.

VA presumes certain chronic, unexplained symptoms existing for 6 months or more are related to Gulf War services without regard to cause. These presumptive illnesses must have appeared during active duty in the Southwest Asia theater of military operations or by December 31, 2021, and be at least 10 percent disabling. These illnesses include:

- * Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS), a condition of long-term and severe fatigue that is not relieved by rest and is not directly caused by other conditions.
- * Fibromyalgia, a condition characterized by widespread muscle pain. Other symptoms may include insomnia, morning stiffness, headache, and memory problems.
- * Functional gastrointestinal disorders, a group of conditions marked by chronic or recurrent symptoms related to any part of the gastrointestinal tract. Functional condition refers to an abnormal function of an organ with a structural alteration in the tissues. Examples include irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), functional dyspepsia, and functional abdominal pain syndrome.

Continued on page 13

Presumptive Disabilities continued from page 12

- * Undiagnosed illnesses with symptoms that may include but are not limited to: abnormal weight loss, fatigue, cardiovascular disease, muscle and joint pain, headache, menstrual disorders, neurological and psychological problems, skin conditions, respiratory disorders, and sleep disturbances.

For VA Benefit purposes, Gulf War service is active military duty in any of the following areas in the Southwest Asia theater of military operations at any time August 2, 1990 to present. This includes Veterans who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom (2003-2010) and Operation New Dawn (2010-2011). This theater of operations includes Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the neutral zone between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, the Gulf of Aden, the Gulf of Oman, the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, and the airspace above these locations.

Presumptive service connection may be granted for the following infectious diseases if found compensable within a specific time period: Brucellosis, Campylobacter jejuni, Coxiella burnetti (Q fever), Malaria, Mycobacterium tuberculosis, Nontyphoid Salmonella, Shigella, Visceral leishmaniasis, and West Nile virus. Qualifying periods of service for these infectious diseases include active military, naval, or air service in the above stated Southwest Asia theater of operations during the Gulf War period of August 2, 1990, until such time as the Gulf War is ended by Congressional action or Presidential proclamation; and active military, naval, or air service on or after September 19, 2001, in Afghanistan.

Camp Lejeune Health and Disability Benefits: Veterans, Reservists and National Guard members exposed to contaminants in the water supply at Camp Lejeune from August 1, 1953 through December 31, 1987 who later developed one of the following eight conditions:

- Adult leukemia
- Aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes
- Bladder cancer
- Kidney cancer
- Liver cancer
- Multiple myeloma
- Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- Parkinson's disease

Veterans and family members who lived on Camp Lejeune and have certain conditions can get health care benefits, for information visit www.clfamilymembers.fsc.va.gov/.



List of Common Allowable (Recurring) Medical Expenses for an Initial Claim Application

The list below shows recurring VA allowable medical expenses for the initial claim application for pension benefits. The list is not all-inclusive and must be unreimbursed by insurance. They must be paid for by the applicant and are used to reduce outside income that exceeds the VA income limit.

1. Medicare Part B Premiums
2. Medicare Part D Premiums
3. Insurance Premiums for supplemental medical insurance
4. Home Health Services
5. Assisted Living Facility Services
6. Nursing Home Services
7. Long Term Care Insurance
8. Medical Monitoring Program (like Life Alert)



There is a new number to call for billing issues through the VAMC for any private health care that was fee based out. That number is 1-877-881-7618 9am to 5pm EST.



SC Hunting and Fishing Licenses for Disabled Veterans

Residents of SC may apply for a disability license by mail or in person at a DNR Regional Office. Offices are located in Columbia, Charleston, Clemson, Florence, York, and DNR at the Market, located at the SC State Farmer's Market in West Columbia. In order to qualify for a disability license you must be declared disabled and receiving disability benefits from one of the following agencies:

- Federal Civil Service
- Medicaid or Railroad Retirement
- SC State Retirement System
- Social Security Administration
- Veterans Affairs (the VA)



In order to qualify for a Disability license you must have been a SC resident for 365 days. DNR must have a completed application, a photocopy of your SC driver's license or SC state issued ID card and current proof (dated within the past 12 months) stating you are disabled and receiving benefits.

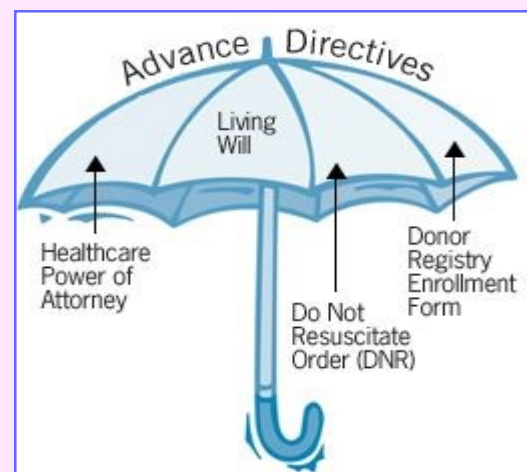
The license will be valid for 3 years and includes privileges of hunting, big game, WMA permit, migratory waterfowl permit and fresh and saltwater fishing.

For more information, you can contact DNR at 803-734-3833 or by visiting their website at dnr.sc.gov/regs/pdf/disabilitylicense.pdf.

Did You Know...



Veterans can obtain advance directives through the Dorn VAMC. For more information contact Cheryl Geddings at 776-4000 ext. 4084.





Appointments are strongly encouraged to meet with our Veterans Benefits Counselors. You can call 803-785-8400 to schedule an appointment. Please allow 48 hours for a return call.

Reminder

Happy
St. Patrick's Day



Sunday, March 17th

Don't forget to wear green!

County Council Needs You!

Veterans are still needed to lead the Pledge of Allegiance at County Council meetings on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month.

County Council meetings start at 4:30pm, so please be present around 4:15pm.

Contact the office at 803-785-8400, if you are interested.

The office would like to thank Adam McCullough, Ernie Massaro, Robert Roemer, Sr., and Roy Mefford. These individuals volunteered their time to say the Pledge of Allegiance during the months of January & February.



THANKS



Dang-it Dolls Workshops

Saturday, March 9th & Saturday, April 13th from 10am to 2pm
Cayce Masonic Lodge,

1701 12th Street, Cayce, SC.

The Lodge Brothers will be preparing their famous Hot Dog Lunch for everyone.

Come for an hour, or spend the day. All help is appreciated. If you are a student, and need community service hours for class credit, please keep us in mind.

Grab a friend and come join in with the stuffing and decorating of the dolls so we can bring smiles and stress relief to our service men and women. To date, with your help, we have shipped over 200,000 Dang-it Dolls all over the world.

We have volunteers ranging in age from 5 years to 90 years old.

There is something for everyone to do and this is the one place where **THE MORE THE MERRIER** really counts.

Just a reminder, Wal-Mart is only carrying minimal amounts of the Morning Glory stuffing in their stores, but it can be ordered from them on-line and shipped free to the store for a little less than the price we were paying. This is the only stuffing we use for the dolls as the other brands are too soft and silky for our purpose.

A 5 pound box costs approximately \$13.00. The average cost of shipping a box of 25 to 30 dolls is \$35.00.

We can always use stuffing donations. We are also in need of funds to ship the dolls.

Any help you can give will be appreciated. For more information, contact Carol Davis at omsrd@yahoo.com.

The History of the Salvation Army continued from page 9



Today the Salvation Army is best known for its charitable efforts. The Salvation Army is well known for its network of thrift stores or charity shops, which raise money for its rehabilitation programs by selling donated used items such as clothing, housewares and toys. Clothing collected by Salvation Army stores that are not sold on location are often sold wholesale on the global second hand clothing market. When items are bought at the Salvation Army thrift stores, part of the proceeds go towards The Salvation Army's emergency relief efforts and programs. Items not sold are recycled and turned into other items such as carpets and rugs, instead of being thrown away in landfills. The familiar use of bell ringers to solicit donations from passers-by "helps complete the American portrait of Christmas." In the U.S. alone, over 25,000 volunteers with red kettles are stationed near retail stores during the weeks preceding Christmas for fundraising. The church remains a highly visible and sometimes controversial presence in many parts of the world.

The Salvation Army, along with the American National Red Cross, Southern Baptist Convention, and other disaster relief organizations, are national members of the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD). In 1994, the Chronicle of Philanthropy, an industry publication, released the results of the largest study of charitable and non-profit organization popularity and credibility. The study showed that The Salvation Army was ranked as the 4th "most popular charity/non-profit in America" of over 100 charities researched. Charity Watch rates the Salvation Army an "A-" to an "A", indicating a high level of financial efficiency and organizational transparency.



SAVE THE DATE...

The 10th Annual Palmetto Patriots Ball is scheduled for Saturday, May 18, 2019 at the Ft. Jackson NCO Club. For more information visit their website at palmettopatriotsball.org.

VA and DOD senior leaders commit to aligned electronic health records system rollout

The U.S. Secretaries of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Defense (DOD) signed a joint statement September 26, 2018 pledging that their two departments will align their plans, strategies and structures as they roll out a new electronic health records (EHR) system that will allow VA and DOD to share patient data seamlessly. Signed by Defense Secretary James N. Mattis and VA Secretary Robert Wilkie, the joint statement reinforces both departments' commitment to ensuring the successful transition from a legacy patient-data system to a modernized one that will continue to support active-duty service members, Veterans and their families.

The VA signed a contract with Cerner Corporation on May 17, 2018 to replace the VA's 40-year-old legacy Veterans Integrated System Technology Architecture (VistA) health care records technology over the next 10 years with the new Cerner system, which is in the pilot phase at DOD. Collaborating with DOD will ensure that the VA: understands the challenges encountered as DOD deploys its EHR system called Military Health System GENESIS (MHS GENESIS); adapts an approach by applying lessons learned to anticipate and mitigate known issues; assesses prospective efficiencies to help deploy faster; and delivers an EHR that is fully interoperable. For more information about VA's Office of Electronic Health Record Modernization, go to www.ehrm.va.gov.



Veterans Resource Fair

March 29, 2019
10am – 2pm

1100 Gervais Street
Columbia SC, 29201

South Carolina
Statehouse
North Lawn



FOR MORE INFORMATION
CONTACT
MR. JAMES C. BROWN
803-576-1908
BROWNJ@RCGOV.US



This is an opportunity
for Veterans to connect
with local agencies and
organizations that provide
resources to Veterans and
the community.



This is a FREE event!
For All
South Carolina Veterans!



Appeals Modernization Act takes effect

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that it has implemented the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017, which was signed into law Aug. 23, 2017, and represents one of the most significant statutory changes to benefit Veterans in decades.

The implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act comes as a direct result of collaboration among VA, Congress and Veteran Service Organizations to deliver on Veterans' longstanding desire for reform of the legacy or old appeals system. Veterans will have greater choice in how the VA reviews their disagreement with a VA claims decision and enjoy timely resolutions of disagreements through a streamlined process.

Veterans who appeal a VA claims decision have three decision review options: Higher-Level Review, Supplemental Claim and Appeal to the Board of Veterans' Appeals. The VA's goal is to complete Supplemental Claims and Higher-Level Reviews in an average of 125 days, and decisions appealed to the Board for direct review in an average of 365 days. Under the legacy process, decisions averaged three to seven years.

The VA remains committed to reducing significantly the inventory of legacy appeals. The VA's fiscal year 2019 budget included funding for 605 additional appeals employees, which the VA used to establish two new Decision Review Operations Centers at the St. Petersburg, Florida, and Seattle, Washington, regional offices. The former Appeals Resource Center in Washington, D.C., was converted to a third Decision Review Operations Center. For more than 18 months, the VA has worked toward full implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act, but reform has been a goal for VA and its stakeholders for years.



CHANGES TO PENSION BENEFITS

The VA has amended the law that affects pension benefits. The basic changes are outlined below.

The VA now considers net worth to be assets plus annual income and this number changes annually. Unreimbursed medical expenses are still factored the same way if the client goes past this amount and used to reduce their net worth under this amount. If the expenses do not reduce their net worth under this amount, they will be denied a benefit. The benefit that will be awarded is still calculated the same way based on income and out of pocket medical expenses.

In addition, the VA now does a three-year look back on assets sold or given away, as well as money given away to anyone. This look back will determine if the client sold or gave away anything in order to get below \$127,061 to qualify for VA pension benefits. The VA will check this through the IRS, Social Security or other computer matching programs.

For the first time the VA is admitting there is a net worth cap and there is a look back on assets and income. If you have questions or concerns, contact the VARO at 1-800-827-1000.

The VA exceeds 1 million video telehealth visits in FY2018

The VA has announced that it has reached a telehealth milestone, achieving more than 1 million video telehealth visits in one fiscal year (FY18), a 19 percent increase in video telehealth visits over the prior year.

Through video technology, VA health care providers are increasing access to care — diagnosing and managing care remotely for enrolled Veterans across the country. Video technologies make it possible for Veterans residing in remote or rural areas to come to many of VA's community-based outpatient clinics and interact in real-time, through video telehealth, with a specialist physician or another practitioner who may be hundreds or thousands of miles away. From October 2017 through September 2018, Veterans received VA quality care during approximately 2.3 million episodes of telehealth care.



The VA ranked 6 out of 18 federal government agencies in 'Best Places to Work' annual tabulation

The Partnership for Public Services has ranked the VA 6th among the 17 largest federal government organizations in 2018 in the organization's annual 'Best Places to Work' tabulation. In 2017, the VA was ranked 17 out of the 18 organizations listed that year.

OUTREACH DATES AND TIMES



Batesburg/Leesville Outreach is the 2nd Friday of the month at the Batesburg/Leesville Library from 10 a.m. to 12 noon.

Chapin Outreach is the 1st Friday of the month at the Chapin Library from 10 a.m. to 12 noon.



Gaston/Swansea Outreach is the 1st Thursday of the month at the Gaston Library from 10 a.m. to 12 noon.

Appointments are strongly encouraged. Call the office at 803-785-8400 to schedule a time.

There will be no outreach in Batesburg/Leesville in April.

DID YOU KNOW...



Copies of all of our newsletters can be found on the Lexington County website at lex-co.com/departments/veteransaffairs/newsletters.

The newsletters are listed on the site by year.



About Our Office

On March 22, 1945 the SC General Assembly adopted a bill creating a VA office in each of the state's 46 counties. The Lexington County VA Director is appointed by the Lexington County delegation. This office is employed by Lexington County; not the Federal VA. The Lexington County Veterans' Affairs Office is an advocate for Veterans and their surviving dependents. We provide the assistance needed in applying for benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs and for VA medical care. The Lexington County VA Office assists former and present members of the US Armed Forces and their dependents in preparing claims. Types of benefits include but not limited to: service connected disabilities and non-service connected pension; death pension benefits; burial; medical care; educational assistance, including vocational rehabilitation; guaranteed home loans; government life insurance and other benefits. We are not trained in Social Security or Department of Defense Benefits but can assist with some of these forms. Our office also provides off-site appointments at three of the County libraries once a month and we can provide home visits on a case by case basis.

The VA has a website anyone can access for all VA questions, SEP user guides, regulations, policies, laws and any other VA resources. The website is: www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov.

Website

VA and U.S. Digital Service Launch New Web Tool to Help Veterans Track their Benefits Appeals

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the U.S Digital Service announced their launch of an improved Appeals Status tool to increase transparency and enable Veterans to track the progress of their benefits claims appeals.

The tool, which went live March 21 on VA's Vets.gov website, will allow Veterans to access detailed information about the status of their benefits appeals and will include alerts about needed actions, as well as estimates of how long each step of the process takes.

Some Veterans who have previewed the new tool said it had given them hope and helped them understand that the process might take longer than expected.

News Tidbits from the VA & Dorn VAMC



The VA has released a Spanish version of the application for health benefits, as part of the VA's effort to simplify and improve the health care, enrollment process for Veterans. The new language version implements the VA Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans' recommendation to provide Spanish versions of the application and instructions.

The VA will release new capabilities this summer providing Veterans who receive care at the VA with the ability to access their personal medical data using the Health Records on iPhone feature from Apple. Veterans will see an aggregated view of their allergies, conditions, immunizations, lab results, medications, procedures and vitals in the Health app on their iPhone. Health Records on iPhone also brings together hospitals and clinics outside the VA with the existing Apple Health app. Veterans can see their available medical data from multiple providers, including the VA, whenever they choose. This new capability has been made possible through the recently announced Veterans Health Application Programming Interface (Veterans Health API). This Veterans Health API allows Veterans to access their health records within innovative applications on their mobile devices or in their web browser.



Happenings Around Lexington County

During the Months of March & April

Saturday, March 9th

Annual St. Patrick's Parade
Downtown Lexington @ 3pm
For more information, visit their website at goblowfishbaseball.com/community.



Thursday, April 11th through Sunday, April 14th

Midlands Plant & Flower Show
at the State Farmers Market
Thursday – Saturday 8am to 6pm
Sunday 10am to 4pm
For more information, contact Brad Boozer at 803-737-4664 or bboozer@scda.sc.gov.



Friday, April 26th

Wine Tasting at Riverbanks Botanical Gardens
7 to 9:30pm
For more information, visit their website at riverbanks.org/events.



Featured Medal: Legion of Merit

The Legion of Merit (LOM) is a military award of the United States Armed Forces that is given for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services and achievements. The decoration is issued both to United States military personnel and to military and political figures of foreign government. The Legion of Merit (Commander degree) is one of only two United States military decorations to be issued as a neck order (the other being the Medal of Honor) and the only United States decoration which may be issued in award degrees (much like an order of chivalry or certain Orders of Merit). The Legion of Merit is sixth in the order of precedence of U.S. Military awards and is worn after the Defense Superior Service Medal and before the Distinguished Flying Cross. In contemporary use in the U.S. Armed Forces, the Legion of Merit is typically awarded to Army, Marine Corps, and Air Force general officers and colonels, and Navy and Coast Guard flag officers and captains occupying command or very senior staff positions in their respective services. It may also be awarded to officers of lesser rank and senior enlisted personnel, but these instances are less frequent and circumstances vary by service. As such, the medal can be considered as "points" in some enlisted promotion systems, such as the Air Force, where it is counted as seven points (out of a possible 25 points for decorations).



Picture of the Legion of Merit medal and ribbon.

An Act of Congress (Public Law 671—77th Congress, Chapter 508, 2d Session) on July 20, 1942, established the Legion of Merit and provided that the medal "shall have suitable appurtenances and devices and not more than four degrees, and which the President, under such rules and regulations as he shall prescribe, may award to

- (a) personnel of the Armed Forces of the United States and of the Government of the Commonwealth Philippines and
- (b) personnel of the armed forces of friendly foreign nations who, since the proclamation of an emergency by the President on 1939-09-08, shall have distinguished themselves by exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services."

The reverse of the medal has the motto taken from the Great Seal of the United States, "ANNUIT COEPTIS" ("He [God] Has Favored Our Undertakings") and the date "MDCCLXXXII" (1782) which is the date of America's first decoration, the Badge of Military Merit, now known as the Purple Heart. The ribbon design also follows the pattern of the Purple Heart ribbon.

Coming in the Next Issue...

100% P&T benefits;

Nursing home, Assisted Living, Independent Living and In-home care;

and clothing allowances