

LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERAN CONNECTION

"Serving those who served and sacrificed for America"



Presented By:

Lexington County Veterans Affairs

605 West Main Street, Suite B

Lexington, SC 29072

(803) 785-8400



FROM THE DIRECTOR

This issue is one of our finest publications and talks about the VA home loan program, how to request military documents and military medals, local July 4th events, where to recycle US flags, the VA appeal process and a new program for eligible Veterans to get TSA pre-check at no cost. We get a lot of inquiries about all of this, and we are honored to provide accurate and timely information so Veterans can make informed decisions.

I hope you were able to vote in our South Carolina primary in June and now campaigning will be narrowed to the winners until the Fall election in November. These elections are made possible by the service of Veterans and those presently serving on active duty. My family and I always vote no matter the circumstances and we consider this to be a sacred rite of every American.

Speaking of active duty, our oldest grandson, who is 17 years old and is a rising senior at River Bluff High School, decided to join the National Guard in February of this year. His grandmother and I were extremely honored to be present at his enlistment ceremony in the same building I enlisted at on Fort Jackson in late 1984. He left for Army boot camp on June 2nd for Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, which is the same Army post where I became a Soldier in February 1985. To say we are proud is an understatement and we look forward to his graduation in mid-August and will all be in attendance. I have never been back to that installation but have talked about it for years and now I have an explicit reason for returning to welcome him into the Soldier ranks. It will be deeply emotional for me, and I look forward to it.

Lastly, I hope you will enjoy the 250th American Independence Day celebrations and activities in our area and in South Carolina. This is the greatest country in the world, and we are privileged to have so many freedoms and choices. God bless America!

Enjoying the journey,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ed". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "E" and a simple "d".

YOUR SERVICE - YOUR BENEFITS
CALL TO SCHEDULE
(803) 785-8400



don't forget

Go to Welcome Center at
Dorn VA Hospital

Enroll in VA Healthcare
TODAY!!
(803) 776-4000



NOTE

*Lexington County
Offices will be closed*

Friday, July 3



Email Us

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Veteran Scam Alert

Scammers may target Veterans by phone, text, email, social media, or mail. Know the warning signs.



COMMON SCAMS



Fake VA calls, texts, or emails asking for personal information



Promises to speed up benefits or PACT Act claims for a fee



Pension poaching and high-pressure financial offers



Phishing links or messages asking for passwords or bank details



PROTECT YOURSELF



Never pay anyone to apply for VA benefits



Do not share your VA login, Social Security number, or banking information



Verify requests through official websites and trusted sources



Work with an accredited Veterans Service Officer or representative



If something feels suspicious, **stop and verify** before you act.



**Veterans
Crisis Line**

DIAL 988 then PRESS 1

**24/7, CONFIDENTIAL CRISIS SUPPORT
FOR VETERANS AND THEIR LOVED ONES.**

You don't have to be enrolled in VA benefits
or health care to connect!

Dial 988 then Press 1

**Chat online at
VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat**

Text 838255

**VET
★
CENTER**

The community has your six!

Free, confidential counseling for
combat Veterans, Service Members,
and Families.

(803) 765-9944

1710 Richland Street, Suite A
Columbia, SC 29201

VA HOME LOANS

1-877-827-3702



About

- No down payment required by VA*
- Competitive interest rates
- Limited closing costs
- No Private Mortgage Insurance (PMI)
- Lifetime benefit: You may use the VA home loan guaranty more than once if eligibility requirements are met.

*VA does not require a down payment. However, a lender may require one in some cases, such as when the purchase price is higher than the appraised value or when the borrower has limited remaining entitlement.

Eligibility Requirements

Eligibility is based on your length of service or service commitment, duty status, and character of service.

National Guard members may also qualify with at least 90 days of active-duty service, including at least 30 consecutive days under Title 32, Sections 316, 502, 503, 504, or 505.

Benefits

- Purchase Loans – VA-backed loans are obtained through a lender of your choice. A Certificate of Eligibility, can be requested through your lender, VA.gov, or by mail.
- Interest Rate Reduction Refinance Loan – Used to refinance an existing VA-backed loan. A new COE is usually not required.
- Native American Direct Loan – A VA direct loan for eligible Native American Veterans, or Veterans married to Native Americans, to buy, build, or improve a home on federal trust land. The tribal organization must participate in the program.
- Adapted Housing Grants – Eligible Veterans may apply for SAH or SHA grants online.
- Foreclosure Avoidance Assistance – VA may help borrowers explore options if they are having trouble making payments on a VA-backed loan.

More Info at <https://www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/>

DO YOU DISAGREE WITH YOUR VA DECISION?

You have 3 decision review options

1



Supplemental Claim

Best if you have new and relevant evidence

- Submit new and relevant evidence VA did not consider before
- VA can help gather records you identify
- VA goal: about 125 days (4–5 months)
- Form: VA Form 20-0995



Goal:
~125 DAYS
(4–5 MONTHS)

2



Higher-Level Review

Best if you believe VA made an error

- A higher-level reviewer looks at the same evidence already in your file
- No new evidence allowed
- You may request a one-time informal conference
- VA goal: about 125 days (4–5 months)
- Form: VA Form 20-0996



Goal:
~125 DAYS
(4–5 MONTHS)

3



Board Appeal

Best if you want a Veterans Law Judge to review your case



1. Direct Review

- No new evidence and no hearing
- VA goal: about 365 days (1 year)



2. Evidence Submission

- Submit evidence with your appeal or within 90 days
- No hearing
- VA goal: about 550 days (1.5 years)



3. Hearing

- Request a hearing with a Veterans Law Judge
- You may submit evidence at the hearing or within 90 days after the hearing
- VA goal: about 870 days (2 years, 5 months)



Form:
VA Form 10182



Important deadline: In most cases, request your review within 1 year of the date on your decision letter.

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Learn more:

VA.gov/decision-reviews

Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



When an American flag becomes worn, faded, torn, or no longer suitable for display, it should be retired respectfully.



Local Drop-Off Location:

**Lexington County
Veterans Affairs Office
605 W. Main St.
Lexington, SC 29072**

Other possible flag retirement locations include:

U.S. Post Offices, Boy Scout or Girl Scout troops, American Legion posts, VFW posts, select Lowe's or Home Depot stores, and funeral homes.*

*** Before dropping off a flag, please contact the location to confirm they are currently accepting flags for retirement.**

FLAG RETIREMENT

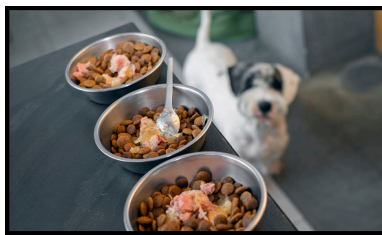


BOOTS IN SERVICE



Some Veterans delay or refuse medical care because they do not have safe, reliable options for their pets while they receive treatment.

Pawmetto Lifeline has learned that many Veterans are unwilling to surrender their beloved pets, even temporarily, and may sacrifice their own health to make sure their pets are cared for.



Boots in Service is currently available by referral only through the Columbia VA Health Care System.

Pawmetto Lifeline provides the following services at no cost to eligible Veterans receiving care:

- Temporary boarding
- Foster homes
- Basic medical services, including vaccinations, microchips, spay/neuter surgeries, and immediate care
- Training support

DID YOU KNOW?



SUMMER HEAT & MEDICATIONS

Some medications can make it harder for your body to stay cool by affecting sweating, thirst, urination, blood flow, or sun sensitivity. VA recommends staying hydrated, finding shade, limiting outdoor activities during the hottest part of the day, and asking your VA provider or pharmacist about summer medication safety.



Summer heat can affect your prescriptions. Keep medications away from direct sunlight, hot vehicles, steamy bathrooms, and other warm places. Some medicines may need to be refrigerated, so check with your VA health care team if you're unsure.

CLAIM DATE SAVER

Not ready to file your VA claim yet? Submit an Intent to File. It can help protect your earliest possible effective date while you gather documents. You have 1 year to complete the claim.

STATE PARK SAVINGS

South Carolina residents age 65+, legally blind, 100% disabled, or active SC National Guard members may buy an All Park Passport at half price. With the qualifying person present, everyone in the vehicle gets park admission. Purchase at any SC State Park office, the State House Gift Shop, or call 803-734-0156 with proof of eligibility. Want to go for free? Ask your local library about the Check Out SC backpack program, which includes a Statewide Park Passport for free day-entry to any SC state park. Availability varies by library.



SUMMER SAVINGS CHECK

Summer costs can add up quickly. Before you spend out of pocket, check whether you qualify for VA travel pay, South Carolina cooling assistance, property tax exemptions, or free/discounted recreation passes. A quick benefits check could save money this season.

VA DISABILITY vs TDIU



If your service-connected disability prevents you from maintaining substantially gainful employment, you may qualify for Total Disability based on Individual Unemployability, also known as TDIU. TDIU allows eligible Veterans to receive disability compensation at the same rate as a Veteran with a 100% disability rating. Keep reading to learn more about eligibility.

DISABILITY COMPENSATION

PURPOSE

Monthly compensation for service-connected conditions, including illnesses, injuries, or impairments.

EMPLOYMENT

Veterans may continue working. Employment does not automatically affect the rating.

INCOME

Income is not used to determine the disability percentage.

HOW IT WORKS

VA assigns a percentage to each condition and combines ratings using VA's rating schedule.



TDIU

PURPOSE

Compensation at the 100% rate when service-connected disabilities prevent steady, gainful employment.

EMPLOYMENT

Veterans generally cannot maintain substantially gainful employment because of service-connected disabilities.

INCOME

Earnings may affect eligibility if they show the Veteran can maintain substantially gainful employment.

HOW IT WORKS

The Veteran must have one service-connected disability rated 60% or higher, or multiple disabilities with one rated 40% or higher and a combined rating of 70% or higher.



TDIU can pay at the 100% rate without changing your combined disability rating.





TSA PRECHECK FOR QUALIFYING DISABLED VETERANS

Free TSA PreCheck® for Certain Veterans with Disabilities

Some Veterans may now qualify for free TSA PreCheck® enrollment through the Veterans Expedited TSA Screening (VETS) Safe Travel Act.

TSA PreCheck® helps eligible travelers move through airport security more efficiently by using dedicated screening lanes. This can make travel easier, especially for Veterans who use mobility devices or prosthetics.

To qualify for the enrollment fee waiver, Veterans must be enrolled in VA health care and have a qualifying service-connected disability. According to VA, qualifying disabilities include permanent blindness, loss or loss of use of a limb, full paralysis, or partial paralysis. The Veteran must also require the use of a VA-issued wheelchair or prosthetic limb because of the service-connected disability.

Eligible Veterans will need a TSA PreCheck Application Fee Waiver Letter from VA.gov. The letter can be used for a new TSA PreCheck® enrollment or renewal. Veterans must still meet TSA's standard citizenship, security, and background check requirements.

For TSA PreCheck® information, visit: tsa.gov/precheck

For questions about VETS Safe Travel Act eligibility, visit: va.gov/contact-us



4th of July

SUMMER

Fun



TOWN OF LEXINGTON

250TH INDEPENDENCE DAY *Celebration*

★ FRIDAY, JULY 3, 2026 ★

🕒 6:00 PM – 10:00 PM

📍 ICEHOUSE AMPHITHEATER • LEXINGTON, SC



COME CELEBRATE THE 250TH
with food, drinks, games, and more!



ACTIVITIES
BEGIN AT
6 PM



LEXINGTON
COMMUNITY BAND
AT 7 PM



FIREWORKS
AT 9:20 PM

COLUMBIA FIREFLIES VS FREDERICKSBURG NATIONALS SATURDAY, JULY 4TH, 6:05 PM



Game Highlight: Independence Day Celebration

Celebrate the Fourth of July with an exciting night at the ballpark! This special Independence Day Celebration, presented by SC250, will feature the official City of Columbia post-game fireworks show — the biggest and brightest fireworks display of the year. Bring the family, enjoy the game, and end the evening with a patriotic fireworks finale!



~ CELEBRATE AMERICA'S 250TH BIRTHDAY AT FORT JACKSON ~

Join the celebration at Hilton Field on July 4, 2026.

Gates open at 4:00 p.m. - Laser Light Show begins at 9:00 p.m.

Fireworks begin at 9:30 p.m.

Enjoy an evening of live music, food trucks, carnival rides for children, a hot dog eating contest, static displays, a cornhole tournament, CYS cheerleaders, and a Car & Jeep Show.

Live music featuring headliner Steve Ray Ladson and the 282nd Army Band.

LEXINGTON COUNTY PEACH FESTIVAL

Get ready for July 4, 2026, in Gilbert, South Carolina!

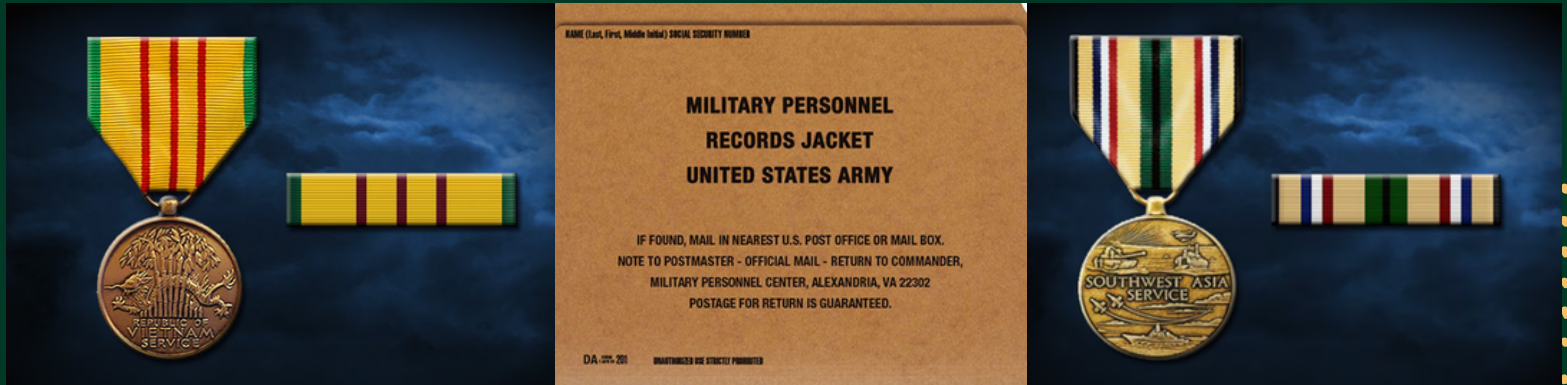
Celebrate Independence Day at the Lexington County Peach Festival, one of the county's sweetest traditions.

This free community event features a parade, food trucks, craft vendors, live entertainment, fireworks, and plenty of peach-themed fun.

Join the celebration on Friday, July 4, 2026, from 9:00 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. at Gilbert Community Park.



HOW TO OBTAIN REPLACEMENT MEDALS & MILITARY DOCUMENTS



Apply Online

Visit www.archives.gov and select Veterans' Service Records to begin your request. Please note: When submitting a new request or retrieving an electronic response, users must verify their identity through ID.me, a third-party identity verification service.

Mail or Fax

National Personnel Records Center

1 Archives Drive
St. Louis, MO 63138

Fax: 314-801-9195

Coast Guard records:
**Coast Guard Personnel
Service Center**

4200 Wilson Blvd., Suite 900
PSC-PSD-MA, Stop 7200
Arlington, VA 20598-7200

How to Request Military Service Records

Visit www.va.gov/forms and search for form SF-180.

**Use this form to request
copies of:**

**Replacement medals
DD Form 214 or equivalent
separation documents
Official Military Personnel
File, also known as OMPF
Medical records
Dental records**



We Want YOU



To Volunteer!

Veterans are invited to lead the Pledge of Allegiance
at Lexington County Council meetings, held on the
2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month.



Location:

County Council Chambers
2nd Floor, County Administration Building
212 South Lake Drive



Time

Meeting begins at 4:30 PM
Please arrive by 4:15 PM and check in inside the chamber



Interested in Participating?



.....
(803)785-8400

or email

ablake@lexingtoncountysc.gov



LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS GROUP



**Join the group every Tuesday from
10:00 AM to 12:00 PM at American
Legion Post 7. On the first Tuesday
of each month, the group gathers
at a local restaurant instead.**

**American Legion Post 7
211 American Legion Dr
(off Harmon St.)
Lexington, SC 29072**

**All Lexington County Veterans
are cordially invited to attend
the weekly meeting.**



**Please contact us for more
information about joining!**

E.C. Murray 803-606-9571

Rich (Richard) Little 803-422-1113



IMPORTANT CONTACTS

LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS AFFAIRS (803) 785-8400

GENERAL SUPPORT & BENEFITS

MyVA411	(800) 698-2411
VA Benefits Hotline	(800) 827-1000
VA Education Hotline	(888) 442-4551
VA Home Loans	(877) 827-3702

WOMEN VETERANS & SPECIALTY SUPPORT

Special Issue Hotline (Blue Water Navy, Gulf War, Agent Orange)	(800) 749-8387
Caregiver Support Line	(855) 260-3274
Dorn Caregiver Support	(803) 695-6777
Quit VET (stop smoking)	(855) 784-8838
Women Veterans Call Cntr	(855) 829-6636

MILITARY, BURIAL & FINANCIAL SERVICES

Ft. Jackson Natl Cemetery	(866) 577-5248
VA Headstones & Marker	(800) 697-6947
SGLI and VGLI	(800) 419-1473
All Other VA Life Ins	(800) 669-8477
DFAS	(800) 321-1080

HOUSING & CRISIS SUPPORT

Mission Lexington	(803) 785-6930
Transitions (Housing, Meals)	(803) 708-4861
VA Natl Homeless Center	(877) 424-3838
Veterans Crisis Line	Dial 988, then press 1
VA Suicide Hotline (Direct)	(800) 273-8255

MEDICAL & HEALTH SERVICES

Healthcare Eligibility	(877) 222-8387
Dorn VA Medical Center	(803) 776-4000
Dorn Patient Advocate	ext: 5693
VA Pharmacy Refills	(800) 293-8262
Community Care	(800) 733-8387
CHAMPVA	(800) 733-8387
CHAMPVA Meds by Mail	(800) 385-0235
TRICARE (SE Region)	(800) 444-5445



National Veterans Legal Services
Program provides free legal representation to Veterans and their families in advanced VA cases. If you've been denied, are facing a complicated appeal, or need help correcting your military discharge, NVLSP's experienced attorneys can step in at no cost to you.

1-800-729-8387

www.nvlsp.org

Free legal help when your case needs the next level of support.

FROM HELLO TO HELP 2-1-1 IS HERE

SC 211 provides information and referral services for all of South Carolina to those needing assistance with rent, electric bills, food pantries, shelters, legal aid, etc.

211

GET CONNECTED.
GET HELP.

CALL
211

TEXT
HELP TO 211-211

United
Way

VISIT
SC211.ORG