

Frequently Asked Questions

—VA Aid and Attendance

There is a little-known benefit available to veterans and their surviving spouses called Aid and Attendance. It is a form of pension that is sent monthly to the veteran and can be used toward care in the home, an assisted-living community, or a board-and-care home.

What is VA Aid and Attendance?

The Veterans Administration (VA) Aid and Attendance pension benefit may be available to wartime veterans who need in-home care or who live in nursing-homes, assisted-living facilities, or residential care homes such as board and care or group homes.

How does a veteran qualify for these benefits, from a health-related standpoint?

The basic health criteria for the Aid and Attendance benefit are long-term care oriented criteria: the inability to feed oneself, to dress and undress without assistance, or to take care of one's own bodily needs. People who are bedridden or need help to adjust special prosthetic or orthopedic devices may also be eligible, as well as those who have a physical or mental injury or illness that requires regular assistance to protect them from hazards or dangers in their daily environment.

Does a veteran have to have served during a period of war to qualify for the benefit?

The veteran must have served at least 90 days of active military service, one day of which was during a period of war, and be discharged under conditions other than dishonorable. Wartime veterans who entered active duty on or after September 8, 1980, (October 16, 1981, for officers) must have completed at least 24 continuous months of military service or the period for which they were ordered to active duty.

What if the veteran has too much income?

Many elderly veterans whose incomes are above the congressionally-mandated limit for a VA pension may still be eligible for the special monthly Aid and Attendance benefit, if they have high medical and/or long-term-care expenses

Does the veteran need to be in a special military hospital or care home?

No. The Aid and Attendance program provides money directly to the eligible veteran or surviving spouse as reimbursement for care expenses incurred by paying any in-home caregiver, assisted-living community, residential-care home or nursing home.

How does the VA determine payment?

If all requirements are met, VA determines eligibility for the Aid and Attendance benefit by adjusting for un-reimbursed medical expenses from the veteran's or surviving spouse's total household income. If the remaining income amount falls below the annual income threshold for the Aid and Attendance benefit, VA pays the difference between the claimant's household income and the Aid and Attendance threshold.

How much financial assistance could this mean to the veteran?

In 2009, a veteran may be eligible for up to a maximum of \$1644/mo. The surviving spouse of a veteran may be eligible for a maximum of \$1057/mo. A married couple may be eligible for a maximum of \$1950/mo, as long as the veteran requires care, and not just the spouse.

My parents were receiving VA Aid and Attendance benefits. My father, who is a veteran, is not doing well. What happens when he is deceased?

The surviving spouse of a veteran needs to re-apply for benefits and also use a special form to request a “month of death” check for the Aid and Attendance benefits. She will need to include a letter of hardship, explaining her situation so that the Aid and Attendance benefits can be reinstated appropriately.

I understand that a physician needs to evaluate the veteran for his or her physical needs. What if the veteran can still perform daily functions but is having memory issues?

If the veteran is aged 65 or older and requires care at home, in a care community, or in a nursing home, then he or she could be eligible for this program, regardless of whether he or she is experiencing physical or mental incapacities.

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