

VETERAN'S CORNER

Medical Care vs. Claims

Most veterans have a lot of misunderstanding with how the VA functions and thus are confused when dealing with the VA for both compensation claims and/or getting medical treatment. Hospitals, clinics, Vet Centers and such provide treatment. They work under their own guidelines, regulations, and budgets. The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) confers compensation/service connection for military related illnesses and injuries, and other commonly known benefits such as home loan guarantees and education. As an example - Going to the Fresno Vets Center for PTSD does not automatically request service connection for PTSD, nor does it automatically guarantee service connection and compensation.

A formal claim for compensation and service connection of a medical problem must be made in order to receive compensation. This is a service our office provides. In order to have a medical problem service connected and compensation paid, there must be evidence of a chronic medical issue being linked to a veteran's active military service. Evidence most frequently comes from military service records, especially medical records. When these are missing, evidence can come from other sources such as witnesses, photos, news stories, and letters to home.

Generally, a claim for benefits or an increase in benefits specifically must be made by the veteran. A visit to a medical facility should not be considered by a veteran to be a claim of any sort, even if a staff member/employee states there is one. Medical treatment at a VA treatment facility does not confer the status of service connection on a medical problem. Service connection is the legal status conferred on a claim that is made only by the VBA and only after a rating decision has been completed.

The Kings County Veterans Service Office can complete the DMV Veteran Status Verification Form for the new California Veteran Designation on your driver's license. We also issue Veteran I.D. cards to honorably discharged veterans. Contact Joe Wright if you would like to receive periodic veteran's information by email. There are many state and federal benefits and programs available to veterans and their dependents. To find out if you are eligible for any of these benefits, visit or call our office. We can and will assist you in completing all required application forms. You can get information on the Web from the Kings County Veterans Service Office webpage at www.countyofkings.com/vets.

Joe Wright, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Veterans Service Officer for Kings County. Send your questions to the Veterans Service Office, 1400 W. Lacey Blvd, Hanford, CA 93230; call (559)852-2669; or e-mail joe.wright@co.kings.ca.us.