

VETERANS CORNER

VA Emergency Care

In 2001, the U.S. Congress provided VA with authorization (called the Mill Bill) to pay for emergency care in non-VA facilities for veterans enrolled in the VA health care system. The benefit will pay for emergency care rendered for non-service-connected conditions for enrolled veterans who have no other source of payment for the care. However, VA will only pay to the point of medical stability. There are very strict guidelines concerning these types of claims. Veterans and their non-VA providers should be aware that these claims must be filed with the VA within 90 days from the last day of the emergent care. This benefit is a safety net for enrolled veterans who have no other means of paying a private facility emergency bill. If another health insurance provider pays all or part of a bill, VA cannot provide any reimbursement. Veterans who retired from the U.S. military are covered by Tricare/CHAMPUS insurance and cannot file a Mill Bill claim.

To qualify, you must be provided care in a hospital emergency department or similar facility providing emergency care. You must be enrolled in the VA Health Care System and must have been provided care by a VA health care provider within the last 24 months. You must be financially liable to the provider of the emergency treatment for that treatment, and have no other form of health care insurance including Medicare, Medicaid, or a state program. You cannot have any other contractual or legal recourse against a third party (such as a Workman's Comp Claim or a Motor Vehicle Accident) that will pay all or part of the bill.

The care must have been rendered in a medical emergency of such nature that a prudent layperson would have reasonably expected that delay in seeking immediate medical attention would have been hazardous to life or health. If you are an eligible veteran, and a VA facility is not feasibly available when you believe your health or life is in immediate danger, report directly to the closest emergency room (ER). If your condition is stabilized by the ER but additional medical care is needed, proceed to the nearest VA Medical Center (VAMC). If hospitalization is required for your service or non-service connected condition, you, your representative or the treating facility should contact the nearest VAMC's Transfer Center within 24 hours to arrange a transfer to VA care. Veterans have a responsibility to ensure that the VA Transfer Center is notified immediately upon any hospital admission.

The Kings County Veterans Service Office issues 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.