



NVLSP

NATIONAL VETERANS LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM

FAQs on Veterans' Benefits under Post-CARES-Act Coronavirus Laws

June 2021

Frequently Asked Questions:

Veterans' Benefits under Post-CARES-Act Coronavirus Laws

The National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP) recognizes that you may have questions about some new and expanded benefits aimed at helping veterans during the COVID-19 pandemic. Below are answers to some frequently asked questions. (This information provides a general overview and may change; for more information, please contact us at info@nvlsp.org).

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Questions & Answers

Disability and Life-Insurance Benefits

- Can I receive veterans' benefits for a COVID-19 diagnosis?
 - For purposes of wartime disability compensation, a veteran's death or disability due to COVID-19 is presumed to be service-related if symptoms appear within a certain period (Effective Jan. 5, 2021; Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020, sec. 4101, HR 7105 pp. 75-77).
- Can I still apply for Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI)?
 - Because of the pandemic, the VA has extended by 90 days the normal deadlines to apply for Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI) after leaving the military. This applies only to applications received between June 11, 2020 and June 11, 2021. (Effective June 11, 2020; 85 Fed. Reg. 35562)

Housing

- I'm a member of the reserve forces and recently completed pandemic-related active service. Do I qualify for housing assistance?
 - Yes, the Department of Defense may give at least two weeks of housing to members of the reserve forces who finished pandemic-related active service. (Effective Jan. 1, 2021; National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021, sec. 517, HR 6395 p. 203)

Student Assistance

- My educational program was suspended due to COVID-19.
 - Can I still receive assistance?
 - Yes. Through December 21, 2021, work-study, educational, and subsistence allowances for veterans are extended for student veterans

whose work or educational program was suspended because of the pandemic. (Effective Apr. 28, 2020, amendment effective Oct. 1, 2020; Student Veteran Coronavirus Response Act of 2020, secs. 3-4, 134 Stat. 631-32, as amended by the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act, sec. 5202, 134 Stat. 749-50)

- Will this assistance count against the 48-month maximum time I have to receive educational assistance under more than one program?
 - No. If the maximum time you can receive assistance under more than one program is limited to 48 months, the assistance you receive during a pandemic-caused work or study suspension will not count against that 48-month limit. This applies to suspensions that happen any time before December 21, 2021. (Effective Apr. 28, 2020, amendment effective Oct. 1, 2020; Student Veteran Coronavirus Response Act of 2020, sec. 5, 134 Stat. 632, as amended by Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act, sec. 5202, 134 Stat. 749-50)
- It will take me longer to finish my educational program because of the pandemic. Will my eligibility period for certain assistance programs be extended?
 - Yes. The time limit to use assistance under the following programs is extended for the amount of time your school was closed or your participation was prevented because of the pandemic. This applies to delays occurring before December 21, 2021.
 - Montgomery GI Bill
 - Post-9/11 Educational Assistance
 - Vocational Rehabilitation and Training for Veterans with Service-Connected Disabilities
 - Educational Assistance for Members of the Selected Reserve(Effective Apr. 28, 2020, amendment effective Oct. 1, 2020; Student Veteran Coronavirus Response Act of 2020, sec. 6, 134 Stat. 632-33, as amended by Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act, sec. 5202, 134 Stat. 749-50)
- I lost my job because of the pandemic. Do I qualify for any job-training assistance?
 - Yes. The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 established the COVID-19 Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance Program. This program pays tuition and housing allowances for eligible veterans who became unemployed due to the pandemic and who enroll in a qualifying job training program. (Effective Mar. 11, 2021; American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, sec. 8006, HR 1319 pp. 110-13)

Healthcare

- Can I get a free COVID-19 vaccine from the VA?
 - Yes, depending on supply. The VA is authorized to administer COVID-19 vaccines to any veteran and their spouse, as well as certain caregivers. But the VA will prioritize veterans enrolled in the VA health system and their accompanying caregivers. (Effective Mar. 24, 2021; SAVE LIVES Act, sec. 2, HR 1276 pp. 1-2)
- Can I get a free COVID-19 test from the VA?
 - Yes, veterans enrolled in the VA's healthcare system can get a free COVID-19 test if they meet certain testing criteria. These tests are by appointment only. More information is available at the VA's website (<https://www.va.gov/coronavirus-veteran-frequently-asked-questions/#covid-19-testing-at-va>). (Current as of May 5, 2021)
- Do I need to pay VA copays during the pandemic?
 - No. The VA may not collect copays between April 6, 2020, and September 30, 2021. If you paid a copay during this time, the VA must reimburse you. (Effective Mar. 11, 2021; American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, sec. 8007, HR 1319 p. 113)
- I receive care from a Vet Center. How are these benefits affected?
 - Payments and allowances related to beneficiaries receiving care from Vet Centers are temporarily expanded. (Effective Oct. 1, 2020; Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act, sec. 5109)
- I'm a member of the National Guard who served full time in response to the pandemic. Do I qualify for any health benefits?
 - You may qualify for transitional health benefits. (Effective Jan. 1, 2021; National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021, sec. 733, HR 6395 p. 315)
- My extended-care services were interrupted because of the pandemic. Can I receive services elsewhere?
 - Yes. Veterans receiving certain extended-care services can transfer to the Veteran Directed Care Program if those services were interrupted because of the pandemic. (Effective Jan. 5, 2021; Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020, sec. 3001, HR 7105 p. 59)
- What mental health resources are available to veterans during the pandemic?
 - [VA's Suicide Prevention Page](#) offers suicide-prevention links and resources for veterans and their family members.
 - [Make the Connection](#) offers resources to help veterans and their family members cope with life events, challenging experiences, and mental illness.

- [National Call Center for Homeless Veterans](#) is staffed by trained counselors who offer confidential support to veterans experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness, as well as their family, friends, and supporters.

Economic Impact Payments

- I didn't receive an economic impact payment. How can I claim it?
 - Most eligible recipients should receive their payments automatically. If you were entitled to a payment but have not yet received it, you may still be able to claim it. Visit the IRS website for more information (<https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus>).

Other VA Benefit Issues

- I'm having trouble paying my VA benefits debt. What are my options?
 - Until September 30, 2021, the VA is suspending collection of debts incurred in April 2020 and later. There are options available to help you deal with your debts. Visit the VA website for more information (<https://www.va.gov/debtman>).
- I'm suffering serious illness caused by the coronavirus. Can I expedite my case at the Board of Veterans' Appeals?
 - Possibly. The Board of Veterans' Appeals may move your case up on the docket if you submit a doctor's statement. Visit the Board's website for more information (<https://www.bva.va.gov/CustomerService.asp>).