
BERRIEN COUNTY

Veterans Services



**VETERANS
BENEFITS
INFORMATION**

VETERAN'S SERVICES HISTORY

The Veterans Administration ordered the closing of its St. Joseph branch office in 1950 as an economy move.

A resolution requesting a veterans services bureau was submitted to the Berrien County Board of Supervisors on July 9, 1951.

On December 10, 1951 the Board of Supervisors authorized the veterans and finance committees to establish the Berrien County Veterans Services Office. The office assisted veterans and dependents in obtaining benefits from the Veterans Administration.

Dr. C. V. Spawr, a well known Benton Harbor physician and active leader in veterans affairs, was appointed as the first Berrien County Veterans Director. Dr. Spawr provided services from his office in the Fidelity Building in downtown Benton Harbor.

The Berrien County Veterans Services Office continues to provide services to thousands of Berrien County veterans and their families.

SEPARATION DOCUMENT

Your Report of Separation (DD-214) is an important document. You are required to submit a certified copy of your DD-214 to the Department of Veterans Affairs when you apply for any benefit. To obtain a certified copy of your DD-214 submit the original (Member Number One) to the Berrien County Clerks Office. Your document will be recorded with the County Clerk and you will receive your original and a certified copy.

If your DD-214 has been lost or destroyed you may request a copy from the National Personnel Records Center. Appropriate request forms may be obtained at the Berrien County Veterans Services Office. ***SAFEGUARD YOUR DD-214.***

MEDICAL TREATMENT

Department of Veterans Affairs medical treatment is available to all veterans who meet certain requirements. Veterans with service connected disabilities will have priority.

DISABILITY COMPENSATION

Veterans may receive compensation payments for disabilities incurred in or aggravated while in military service. The amount of the monthly compensation paid is determined by the severity of the condition. If a veteran is rated 30 percent or more disabled, additional monies will be awarded for dependents.

DISABILITY PENSION

The Department of Veterans Affairs will pay a pension benefit to veterans with war-era service who meet certain income requirements and are determined permanently and totally disabled. Veterans 65 years of age or older are encouraged to apply. Supplemental benefits may also be claimed for veterans who are permanently housebound or in nursing homes.

REPORTING INCOME CHANGES

Veterans, dependents and widows of veterans receiving pension benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs are required to report all income changes promptly to avoid an overpayment. If an overpayment is created your benefits may be suspended or terminated.

ADDRESS CHANGES

If you are receiving veterans benefits and change your address you must notify the Department of Veterans Affairs immediately. If you fail to inform the DVA of your new address you may not receive your future benefit checks. Change of address forms are available at the Berrien County Veterans Services office.

BURIAL ALLOWANCES

The Department of Veterans Affairs is allowed to pay \$300.00 for an honorably discharged veterans burial expenses if the veteran was entitled to a DVA pension, compensation or in a DVA facility at the time of death. Also, an additional \$300.00 allowance will be paid toward the cost of a plot or interment for war-era veterans. If the veterans death is service-connected the DVA will pay up to \$2,000.00

BURIAL FLAG

The Department of Veterans Affairs will furnish an American Flag to drape the casket of an eligible veteran who was discharged under conditions other than dishonorable. Following the funeral services, the flag may be given to the next of kin or close friend of the deceased. Flags are issued at any DVA office and many local post offices.

ALCOHOL / DRUG TREATMENT

Eligible veterans can receive treatment for substance abuse. Veterans accepted into the Battle Creek DVA Medical Center for treatment may be admitted directly to the Substance Abuse Treatment Unit program or, if deemed medically necessary, to the Detoxification Unit. Following detoxification, the veteran may be admitted to the treatment program.

The treatment program is approximately 30 days in length. Treatment focuses on identifying and exploring behavior patterns leading to and maintaining the substance abusing behavior. Treatment includes group counseling, individual counseling and therapy. Admission requirements, veterans should be:

- Discharged honorably from military service;
- Actively interested in terminating his/her substance abuse;
- Free from current severe psychiatric problems and/or severe memory loss;
- Willing to complete a minimum of 30 days uninterrupted inpatient treatment;
- Free from court related obligations (veterans may be referred to treatment as an option to incarceration or as a stipulation of probation);
- Free from acute medical or surgical problems which would prevent him/her from actively participating in the various treatment modalities in the program.

SERVICES AVAILABLE

Address Changes
Agent Orange Claims
Burial Allowances
CHAMPVA
Death Pension
Dental Treatment
Dependency & Indemnity Compensation
Disability Compensation
Disability Pension
Education Assistance
Home Loan Guarantee
Hospitalization
Insurance
Medical Treatment
Substance Abuse
Veterans Counseling
Transportation to VA Medical Centers
TRICARE

For additional information call or write:

Berrien County
Veterans Services Office
701 Main St.
St. Joseph, MI 49085
(269) 983-7111, Ext. 8224 / 8118

Monday - Friday 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

To reach the Courthouse from:

Buchanan, Niles 684-5274
Galien 695-3887
Three Oaks, New Buffalo,
Lakeside, Union Pier 756-9571
Bridgman, New Troy, Sawyer 465-5373

Ext. 8224 / 8118

LEE G. LULL, Director