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7 FAM 540 DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

*(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)
(Office of Origin: CA/OCS/PRI)*

7 FAM 540 VETERANS AFFAIRS

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

[VA Website](#)

[U.S. TOLL-FREE NUMBER 1-800-827-1000](#)

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is responsible for providing Federal benefits to veterans and their dependents by operating programs for health care, financial assistance and national cemeteries.

A Veteran is anyone who has served in the active military, naval, or air service and was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable. Reservists may also qualify for benefits after fulfillment of certain duty.

Who is eligible for VA benefits?

Generally, 24 continuous months of active military service is required to establish eligibility for most benefits. However, disabilities that result from a personal injury or disease that was incurred or aggravated during military service also establish eligibility, regardless of the amount of time served. Since eligibility varies by program, the best way to review specific criteria is to visit the VA website.

You may also consult the "Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents" booklet available in both English and Spanish, on the VA Website.

Where do veterans get necessary forms?

Visit [Veterans Forms](#)

Can veterans register on-line?

Yes, visit Veterans Register On-line.

7 FAM 541 WHAT IS THE CONSULAR OFFICER'S AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY REGARDING VETERANS AFFAIRS MATTERS ABROAD?

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7 FAM 541.1 Authorities

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

22 U.S.C. 3904 (3) (Functions of Service)

38 CFR Veterans Benefits (Pensions, Bonuses, and Veterans Relief)

7 FAM 541.2 What is the Role of the Regional Federal Benefits Officers Regarding Veterans Affairs?

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

The Regional Federal Benefits Officers act as VA's agent abroad assisting veterans and beneficiaries with both the origination of new benefits claims and the administration of existing ones.

7 FAM 541.3 What is the Role of the Consular Officer?

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

a. Federal law mandates entitlement to federal benefits. Each federal benefits-paying agency establishes policies and procedures under which the laws are administered. When policies and procedures are applied outside the United States, your assistance is required.

b. Posts are expected to provide a broad range of services, e.g., advising applicants about benefits, providing the necessary forms, assisting them in completing the forms, arranging medical appointments, developing and adjudicating claims, providing referrals and following up with VA when necessary. Seek advice from your Regional VA office when you don't have the answers (see 7 FAM 542.2-3. Your Regional Federal Benefits Officer is also an alternative avenue for consultation in resolving policy and procedural issues.

7 FAM 541.4 What is the Role of CA/OCS/PRI?

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

a. The Office of Policy Review and Interagency Liaison (PRI) is the Department's liaison with the Department of Veterans Affairs and other federal benefits-paying agencies and consular posts abroad as well as with members of the public and Congress. PRI provides guidance, disseminates information and implements new programs/benefits. PRI also resolves problem cases referred to the Department by other federal agencies or the consular post involved.

b. In essence, PRI shares the administrative and managerial responsibilities with the Department of Veterans Affairs and other federal benefits-paying agencies for the Federal Benefits Programs abroad to ensure efficient and fraud-free payment of benefits as well as the provision of services.

c. We have also set up ASKPRI@state.gov, an e-mail address within OCS/PRI, where you may send questions and be assured that the appropriate person gets your question and responds as soon as possible. We encourage you to also

provide complex case examples on ASKPRI@state.gov so OCS/PRI can share them with other posts for advice/suggestions or for their information.

7 FAM 541.5 Are there Limitations on Consular Officers Regarding Veterans Affairs Work and Disclosure of Information (Privacy Act)?

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

a. Information contained in a name-retrievable system of records concerning a claimant of veteran's benefits and programs may not be disclosed except:

- As expressly authorized by VA
- By written authorization by the individual who is the subject of the record
- In accordance with the 12 exceptions to the conditions of disclosure in the Privacy Act, as amended (5 U.S.C. 552a (b)1-12) See CA OCS Intranet Privacy Act feature.

b. Any unauthorized disclosure is subject to criminal penalties pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 552a (Privacy Act, as amended).

7 FAM 542 WHAT COMPENSATION AND PENSION BENEFITS ARE PROVIDED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS THAT VETERANS ABROAD MAY NEED HELP PURSUING?

7 FAM 542.1 Descriptions and Definitions

7 FAM 542.2 How does a Claimant Apply for Benefits and What is the Consular Role in Verification of Information?

7 FAM 542.2-1 What is the Role of the Consular Officer?

7 FAM 542.2-2 Date-stamping Documents

7 FAM 542.2-3 Where do Veterans Send Claims, Applications, Inquiries, Address Changes, etc. when Abroad?

7 FAM 542.1 Descriptions and Definitions

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

Following are brief descriptions of the major benefits available through the Department of Veterans Affairs to eligible veterans and their dependents who are living abroad.

For more detailed information and eligibility criteria, access the VA Foreign website.

a. Education

Monetary assistance may be available to veterans, surviving spouses and dependent children through the Montgomery GI Bill (Active Duty), Montgomery GI Bill (Selected Reserve), Veterans' Education Assistance, and Dependents Education Assistance programs. **Outside of the United States, trainees must attend a VA-approved degree-granting college or university.**

b. Disability Compensation

Disability compensation is a monthly monetary benefit payable to veterans disabled by injury or disease incurred or aggravated during active military service.

c. Pension

Veterans with low incomes may be eligible for this monetary support if they have 90 days or more of active military service, one day of which was during a period of war. The veteran must be permanently and totally disabled for reasons other than military service or the veteran's own willful misconduct.

Certain VA pensioners and parents in receipt of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) are required to report their income annually (annual verification). Income is reported on Eligibility Verification Reports (EVRs), which are automatically mailed to beneficiaries. Each beneficiary also receives a VA Form 21-0510, Eligibility Verification Instructions.

**For more information visit: VA
Compensation and Veterans Benefits**

d. Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment

An eligible service-connected disabled veteran may receive employment assistance, self-employment assistance, training in a rehabilitation facility, and college and other training needed to overcome an employment handicap caused by his/her service-connected disability. While in training and for two months after completing training, eligible veterans may receive subsistence allowances in addition to their disability compensation or retirement pay. **Outside of the United States, the veteran must be training in a VA-approved degree-granting college or university.**

e. Insurance

Two life insurance and two disabled insurance programs are currently open for new policyholders.

Servicemen's Group Life Insurance is open to active-duty and reserve members of the uniformed services.

Veterans' Group Life Insurance is renewable five-year term coverage available to individuals for one year and 120 days

after release from active duty.

Service Disabled Insurance is available for veterans with service-connected disabilities.

Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance is not available to individuals living abroad.

For more information on insurance plans, visit VA Insurance website or call 1-800-669-8477 within the U.S.

f. Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

A monthly monetary benefit payable to surviving spouses, certain children, and low-income parents of service members or veterans who died from:

- A disease or injury incurred or aggravated while on active duty or active duty for training
- An injury incurred or aggravated in the line of duty while on inactive duty training; or
- A disability compensable by VA

If the veteran's death were not service-related, surviving spouses, certain children, and low-income parents may still be eligible if ANY of the following conditions existed at the time of death:

- The veteran was getting VA Disability Compensation for a total disability for the last 10 years. (**Note:** This also includes veterans who would have received VA compensation, but didn't because they were getting military retirement or disability pay.)
- The veteran was getting VA Disability Compensation for a total disability continuously since released from active duty and for at least 5 years.
- The veteran was a former prisoner of war, was getting VA Disability Compensation for a total disability continuously for at least one year before death, and died after September 30, 1999.

g. Death Pension

Surviving spouses and unmarried children of a deceased veteran with wartime service may be eligible for a non

service-connected pension based on need. Spouses must not have remarried and children must be under age 18, or under age 23 if attending a VA-approved school.

h. Burial Benefits

Eligible veterans may be entitled to a burial allowance, a burial flag, a headstone or grave marker, a Presidential Memorial Certificate, and/or burial in a national cemetery.

For more information see the VA Burial and Memorial Benefits site.

7 FAM 542.2 How does a Claimant Apply for Benefits and What is the Consular Role in Verification of Information?

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

VA Foreign Medical Program site

a. Developing a claim is a critical responsibility beginning with the application. Benefit claims including applications, case inquiries, changes of address, etc. for veterans and dependents residing in foreign countries are processed at the VA regional office of jurisdiction. It may take 9-12 months to process some complex cases.

b. First-time claimants for disability compensation or pension must submit to the VA regional office:

- A completed VA 21-526 and Proof of Service (DD-214, DD-215, or for WWII veterans, a WD form) and supporting documents of the disability (treatment and medical records)

or

- Their full name, military service number, branch, dates of service, and supporting documents of the disability (treatment and medical records)

Dependents/survivors must in addition provide certified copies of their birth certificate, marriage certificate, passports, etc. as identity/relationship

c. First-time claimants for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) should submit to the VA regional office:

- VA 21-534, Application for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation or Death Pension by Widow, Widower, or Child (Part IV, V and VI need not be completed, unless the claimant also wishes consideration of pension entitlement). VA 21-535, Application for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation by Parent(s), is to be used by parents. The form should be completed in its entirety
- The following information must be included with the VA 21-535, a copy of the veteran's death certificate (must show cause of death); copies of marriage/birth certificates; divorce decrees, if applicable; and a military discharge certificate.

7 FAM 542.2-1 What is the Role of the Consular Officer?

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

a. Foreign Service officers are authorized to act on behalf of the VA; therefore, claims filed in a foreign country will be considered as filed in the Department of Veterans Affairs as of the date of receipt by the State Department representative.

b. You should:

- Verify identity of the claimant
- Offer advice on filling out applications
 - Refer to appropriate web sites for guidance if necessary
 - Review applications for completeness and accuracy
 - Verify the veteran has indicated the type of benefit for which he/she is applying
 - Verify that he or she actually has a service-connected disability

Some veterans may need special assistance in completing the forms. (If fraud is suspected, see "Management of a Federal Benefits Unit" section for guidance. (See 7 FAM 590.)

- Mail completed applications if requested
- Make appropriate inquiries or referrals on the beneficiary's behalf

7 FAM 542.2-2 Date-stamping Documents

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

a. VA considers most claims effective upon receipt by either the VA or its agents (State Department representatives).

The effective date of a claim is a critical issue. Because the effective date of claim may dictate the effective date of payment, you must be certain that advice, counseling, claims development and submissions are prompt and accurate.

b. You should:

- Date-stamp documents the day received at post.
- Use space provided (usually upper right hand corner) or stamp in a prominent area.
- Initial and place your title under the date stamp.
- Verify that no alterations have been made to the supporting documents.

c. As agents of VA, consular personnel may certify the documents. The following statement must be used when certifying documents:

The original document (or record) of which this is a copy (or, from which this excerpt was taken) appears to be genuine and unaltered and to have been made at the time purported. This document consists of ____ pages.

Signature_____

Title_____

Post_____

Date_____

d. To preserve originals (birth certificates, marriage certificates and discharge papers) **copies** may be date-stamped. Return originals to the owner.

FAX completed applications to VA on the date they are stamped whether or not development of the case is complete so VA can begin processing.

7 FAM 542.2-3 Where do Veterans Send Claims, Applications, Inquiries, Address Changes, etc. when Abroad?

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

(Also see claims section under specific programs.)

Compensation and Pension Claims:

Canada

(Benefits and Medical Treatment)
VA Medical and Regional Office Center
215 North Main Street
White River Junction, VT 05009
FAX: 802-296-5174
E-mail: VAVBAWRJ/RO/VSC@vba.va.gov

Mexico, South and Central America, Caribbean

(Benefits Only)
VA Regional Office

6900 Almeda Road
Houston, TX 77030
FAX: 713-794-3818
E-mail: Houstonfsi@vba.va.gov

Philippines

(Benefits and Medical Treatment)

VA Out-patient Clinic
1131 Roxas Boulevard
Pasay City, Philippines
FAX: 632-831-4454
E-mail: Manlvaro.inquiry@vba.va.gov

All Other Countries

(Benefits Only)

VA Regional Office
Foreign Claims
1000 Liberty Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
FAX: 412-395-6057
E-mail: VAVBAPIT/RO/embassy@vba.va.gov

Headstones/Markers (All countries)

Department of Veterans Affairs
Memorial Programs Service
P.O. Box 34760
Washington, DC 20043-4760
FAX: 202-501-3058
E-mail: MPS.headstones@mail.va.gov

Insurance (All countries)

VA Regional Office and Insurance Center
P.O. Box 13399
5000 Wissahickon Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19101
FAX: 215-381-3502
E-mail: issjmcca@vba.va.gov

Educational Assistance (All countries)

VA Regional Office
P.O. Box 4616
Buffalo, NY 14240-4616

FAX: 716-551-3332
E-mail: buffrpo@vba.va.gov

When submitting an inquiry to VA:

- Provide the Veteran's full name and claim number or SSN on all inquiries (including those from a widow/widower or children).
- State the question/situation clearly.
- Include all necessary dates in this format: (month/day/year, e.g., May 24, 1941).

7 FAM 543 DISABILITY EVALUATION EXAMINATIONS

7 FAM 543.1 How to Request an Examination

7 FAM 543.2 What is the Role of the Consular Officer?

7 FAM 543.3-9 Unassigned

7 FAM 543.1 How to Request an Examination

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

a. VA requires examinations to establish the presence or absence of a claimed disease, injury, or residual condition, and, if existent, the extent of disability.

b. The VA Foreign Medical Program Office (FMP) will notify the claimant directly that a request for examination has been sent to the Foreign Service post of jurisdiction. FMP will include in the request for examination a copy of VA Form 21-2545, Report of Medical Examination for Disability Evaluation for the claimant to give to the examining physician.

c. Occasionally, a veteran will request a disability evaluation examination. He/she should be advised to request authorization by writing to:

Foreign Medical Program Office
Health Administration Center
P. O. Box 65021
Denver, CO 80207-5021
FAX: 303-331-7803

E-mail: HAC.FMP@MED.VA.GOV

7 FAM 543.2 What is the Role of the Consular Officer?

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

a. VA Form 21-2507, Request for Physical Examination, will be forwarded to the post and will specify the type of examination(s) required noting the condition(s) claimed by the beneficiary. Evaluation guidelines will be provided for certain specialty examinations, e.g., psyche, cardiovascular, or hearing and sight.

b. You should assist the veteran by actually scheduling the examinations with a physician(s) or medical facility recommended by the post medical officer. Do **not** give the form to the veteran to schedule his/her own appointment.

c. Inform the physician or medical facility that the VA will be responsible for the cost of the examination and that payment is made in U.S. currency. The health care provider should be advised to let the post know if payment has not been received within 90 days in which case VA should be advised of the delinquency.

d. Notify the veteran regarding the appointment and instruct him/her to report to both the post and the doctor if he/she is unable to keep the appointment.

e. Examination reports (Form 21-2545) and invoices should be forwarded to VA through the post scheduling the examination as specifically instructed on the transmittal letter sent with the Request for Examination. If the physician is a specialist, advise him/her that the report should be made on physician letterhead. Advise the physician that reports should be completed within 30 days of the examination if possible.

The process of sanitizing the mail destroys information which is printed on any type of heat sensitive paper, i.e., thermal paper, this includes medical reports, compensation and pension medical examinations, EKG printouts and any other reports which are printed on heat sensitive paper.

Therefore, you should photocopy material printed on heat sensitive paper and forward the photocopy with the examination to:

VA Regional Office
Foreign Claims
1000 Liberty Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

The photocopies should be certified as indicated in 7 FAM 542.2-2.

The original documents should be retained for six months in the event VA needs to retrieve them.

f. What if the claimant fails to report for examination?

Return the examination request (VA Form 21-2507) to the Washington Regional Office or Houston Regional Office for cancellation 30 days following the original examination date. (This is important because Congressional Oversight Committees require VA to close all pending cases within this period.)

g. What if the veteran asks to reschedule an examination?

- The veteran should first provide a reasonable justification for rescheduling in writing.
- The rescheduled examination should be conducted within 30 days of the date of the original examination date.
- If the veteran does not follow up and the examination is not rescheduled, return the request and authorization to the Washington Regional Office or Houston Regional Office 30 days after the date of the original examination date.

h. What if travel is necessary for a Disability Examination?

If travel is necessary, this should be clearly stated by the veteran in the veteran's request for authorization to the VA FMP. If authorization is granted, the VA will send the veteran VA Form 07-3542, Authorization to Report Voucher for Mileage Allowance (or an allowance for another mode of transportation) as part of the examination request. The veteran should send the completed mileage voucher, to: VA Health Administration Center (Denver). See **7 FAM 543.1**.

7 FAM 544 MEDICAL TREATMENT AND SERVICES

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

Reimbursed medical care and medical equipment is limited to services that are required to treat adjudicated service-connected conditions. See below for specific information by geographic region. Prescriptions and prosthetic appliances may also be provided.

For further information, visit the VA Foreign Medical Program site.

7 FAM 544.1 2 Foreign Medical Program (FMP) for all Countries Except Canada and the Philippines

7 FAM 544.2 Foreign Medical Program (FMP) Canada

7 FAM 544.3 Foreign Medical Program (FMP) Philippines

7 FAM 544.4 Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA)

7 FAM 544.5 TRICARE

7 FAM 544.6 Dental Examinations and Treatment

7 FAM 544.1 Foreign Medical Program (FMP) for all Countries Except Canada and the Philippines

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

a. **Application** (Prior to treatment)

Veterans should register with the FMP before obtaining health services. The registration form can be obtained by contacting the FMP office or via the FMP web site.

Foreign Medical Program Office (FMP)
Health Administration Center
P. O. Box 65021
Denver, CO 80207-5021

Telephone: 303-331-7500
U.S. toll-free: 1-800-744-8387
FAX: 303-331-7803
E-mail: hac.fmp@med.va.gov
See VA Foreign Services Program site.

b. Authorization

- FMP will confirm eligibility and forward an FMP authorization directly to the veteran.
- The authorization will identify him/her VA adjudicated service-connected condition(s) for which treatment is authorized and provide a certification that the Department of Veterans Affairs will assume payment for treatment that is medically necessary for those identified conditions and is accepted by the VA/US medical community.
- Pre-authorization is not required except for medical equipment valued at \$300 US or more.
- FMP approves medical equipment requests (\$300 US or more) and determines whether the request will be filled by a VA source and shipped to the veteran, or authorizes the veteran to purchase the item locally at VA expense.

c. Claims

- May be submitted by veteran/fiduciary or the provider of services.
- Must be submitted directly to FMP office.
- Must be submitted no later than two years from the date of treatment/service.
- Must include:
 - Veteran's full name
 - VA Claim Number
 - U.S. Social Security number
 - Provider's full name and billing address
 - Provider's itemized billing statement with a medical diagnosis of condition(s) treated, a narrative description of each service, the billed

charge, and the date(s) of service

- Medical record documentation (i.e. outpatient notes, hospital discharge summaries and operative reports) which justifies the necessity of the service and its relationship to the veteran's adjudicated service-connected condition(s)
- Claims for prescription drugs indicating the names and quantities of each drug dispensed, and/or prosthetic appliances

d. Payments

All payments are made in U.S. currency based on the exchange rate effective on the date of service. For episodes of hospitalization, the exchange rate is based on the date of discharge.

Where to send:

Authorization requests, claims, inquiries, etc. dealing with the Foreign Medical Program, except Canada and the Philippines, should be directed to:

Foreign Medical Program Office
Health Administration Center
P.O. Box 65021
Denver, CO 80206-9021
FAX: 303-331-7803
E-mail: hac.fmp@med.va.gov.

7 FAM 544.2 Foreign Medical Program (FMP) Canada

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

a. General

The Reciprocal Agreement between Canada and the United States is the basis for bilateral arrangements concerning authorized care for U.S. veterans residing or sojourning in Canada. While treatment authorizations are under the exclusive jurisdiction of the White River Junction VA Medical and Regional Office Center (VAM&ROC), claims and payments are coordinated by Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC).

b. Services

- Treatment is limited to adjudicated service connected disabilities only.
- Canadian medical care services, including hospitalization and examinations for VA compensation and pension purposes, are administered by the VA Medical and Regional Office Center in White River Junction, VT.

c. **Application** (Prior to treatment)

Veterans should be advised to submit their requests for VA authorized treatment in writing and send them to:

Foreign Countries Operations
Veterans Affairs Canada
66 Slater Street (Room 1407)
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0P4
Telephone: 613-996-2242
FAX: 613-947-2962

or

Canadian Fee Service
VAM&ROC (136FC)
215 North Main Street
White River Junction, VT 05009
Telephone: 802-296-6379
FAX: 802-296-6380
E-mail: vanbawrj/ro/vsc@vba.va.gov

Include the following information:

- Veteran's full name
- VA claim number
- U.S. Social Security number
- Mailing address
- Telephone and FAX numbers (if available)
- Veteran's (or fiduciary's) signature and date
- Date and condition for which treatment is requested

d. **Claims**

Provider payment arrangements will be made by VAC once bills are submitted as stated in 7 FAM 544.3.

e. Authorization

VA will send authorization for care of specific conditions to VAC. The authorization will identify the condition(s) for which care is authorized, and that VA will assume payment responsibility for medically necessary services that are accepted by the VA/US medical community and are directly related to the treatment of the veteran's service-connected condition(s). The authorization will be for a period not to exceed three years and will state a monthly limitation. Whenever possible, pre-authorization should be obtained through VAC if residing in Canada or through the VA Medical and Regional Office Center (VAM&ROC) for veterans traveling through Canada.

What if pre-authorization were not obtained and reimbursement is being sought?

Then, VA Form 10-583 Claim for Payment of Cost of Unauthorized Medical Services may be forwarded to the White River Junction VAM&ROC for consideration.

7 FAM 544.3 Foreign Medical Program (FMP) Philippines

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

a. General

The VA Regional Office & Outpatient Clinic Manila administers VA medical care in the Philippines. Medical care may be provided for service-connected disabilities and, with limitations, for the nonservice-connected disabilities of those veterans who also have recognized service-connected disabilities.

Outpatient medical care for treatment of service-connected disabilities will be provided at the VA Outpatient Clinic Manila and through contract inpatient and/or outpatient, fee basis providers. Outpatient medical care for treatment of the nonservice-connected disabilities mentioned above is limited to the care that can be provided at the VA Outpatient Clinic Manila.

b. Application (Prior to treatment)

Veterans should be advised to submit their requests for VA

authorized treatment in writing and send them to:

VA Outpatient Clinic
1131 Roxas Boulevard
Pasay City, Philippines
FAX: 011-632-838-4566
E-mail: Manlaro.inqry@vba.va.gov

Include the same information as indicated in 7 FAM 544.2 (c).

c. Claims

Reimbursement for medical care not authorized by the Manila Clinic will be requested through VA Form 10-583, Claim for Payment of Cost of Unauthorized Medical Services, and submitted to the address specified in 7 FAM 544.1. Payment for unauthorized medical care will be made by the Manila Clinic directly to the claimant in Philippine currency.

d. Authorization

Upon receipt of a treatment request, the Manila VA Outpatient Clinic will confirm eligibility through the Manila VA Regional Office.

Upon verification of eligibility, the VA clinic will coordinate medical care directly with the veteran. Unless the need for emergency care precludes otherwise, pre-authorization will be required for medical care and services not provided through the Manila VA Outpatient Clinic.

7 FAM 544.4 Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA)

a. General

CHAMPVA, medical care for dependents and survivors, is a health benefits program in which VA shares with eligible beneficiaries the cost of certain healthcare services and supplies. Veterans should be encouraged to visit the VA medical program HAC website because the coordination with TRICARE and MEDICARE is complex and requires special expertise.

b. Who is eligible for CHAMPVA benefits?

To be eligible for CHAMPVA, the family member cannot be eligible for TRICARE (formerly called CHAMPUS) and; must be in one of these categories:

- The spouse or child of a veteran who has been rated 100% permanently and totally disabled for a service connected disability by a VA regional office
- The surviving spouse or child of a veteran who died from a VA-related service-connected disability; or who, at the time of death, was rated 100% permanently and totally disabled
- The surviving spouse or child of a military member who died in the line of duty, not due to misconduct (in most of these cases, these family members are eligible for TRICARE, not CHAMPVA)

To be eligible for CHAMPVA benefits when over age 65, the family member must also meet the following conditions:

- If the family member turned 65 before June 5, 2001, and only has Medicare Part A, he/she will be eligible for CHAMPVA without having to have Medicare Part B coverage.
- If the family member turned 65 before June 5, 2001 and has Medicare Parts A and B, he/she must keep both Parts to be eligible.
- If the family member turned age 65 on or after June 5, 2001, he/she must be enrolled in Medicare Parts A and B to be eligible.

c. What does CHAMPVA cover?

In general, CHAMPVA shares with beneficiaries the cost of most health care services and supplies that are medically or psychologically necessary. Special rules and/or limitations, however, apply to certain services. Some services (even when prescribed by a physician) are not covered at all. Clarification on covered/noncovered services as well as limitations, can be obtained by contacting the VA Health Administration Center (Denver).

d. How can a veteran's family member apply for CHAMPVA benefits?

Applicants should complete VA Form 10-10d (Application for Medical Benefits for Dependents or Survivors – CHAMPVA).

Upon receipt of a completed VA Form 10-10d, the eligibility of the veteran sponsor and the applicant's relationship to the veterans will be confirmed with the respective VA regional office. Those determined eligible will be issued a CHAMPVA Authorization Card (A-Card) and a CHAMPVA Handbook – detailing benefits and claim filing instructions.

e. Where to send applications, claims, correspondence and inquiries:

VA Health Administration Center
CHAMPVA Foreign
P.O. Box 65023
Denver, CO 80206-9023
Telephone: 303-331-7599
U.S. toll-free: 1-800-733-8387
FAX: 303-331-7804
E-mail: hac.inq@med.va.gov
VA Foreign Medical Program HAC site

Filing Deadlines - claims for health care benefits must be received by the Health Administration Center no later than one year after the date of service or, in the case of inpatient care, the claim must be filed within one year of the discharge date. Claims filed after these deadlines will be denied.

f. How can a family member apply for the CHAMPVA reimbursement?

Filing Instructions - Either the beneficiary or provider (doctor, hospital or clinic) may submit claims. However, a CHAMPVA Claim Form (VA Form 10-7959A) must accompany claims from beneficiaries. In addition, a copy of the provider's itemized billing statement(s) must accompany all claims. Beneficiary claims that are not accompanied by a completed CHAMPVA Claim Form will result in the payment going directly to the provider (doctor, hospital or clinic). The HAC provides translation services, so bills in foreign languages are acceptable.

For more information, visit the VA Foreign Medical Program HAC site.

7 FAM 544.5 TRICARE

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

a. TRICARE is a regionally managed health care program for active duty and retired members of the uniformed services, their families, and survivors. Although similar to CHAMPVA, TRICARE is a separate and distinct program. It brings together the health care resources of the Defense Department, supplementing them with civilian health care professionals.

b. In order to take advantage of TRICARE, retirees and their eligible family members living abroad must be enrolled in Medicare Part B, have a valid I.D. card and be properly registered in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). Because Medicare does not provide health care coverage abroad, retirees living abroad will be responsible for the same cost shares and deductibles under TRICARE.

For more information about enrolling in Medicare B, visit the Social Security Administration site.

c. Most military bases have a TRICARE coordinator. Retirees and their eligible family members should be advised to consult them.

For more information, visit the TRICARE site or call 1-888-777-9343 from abroad.

7 FAM 544.6 Dental Examinations and Treatment

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

Visit web site Foreign Medical Program Manual.

7 FAM 545 Benefit Checks

7 FAM 545.1 Methods of Payment

7 FAM 545.2 What if a Benefits Check is not Received?

7 FAM 545.1 Methods of Payment

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

a. Currently, direct deposit of VA checks abroad has not been established; however, American citizen applicants may arrange to have direct deposit to a U.S. account through their banking facility in the U.S. Otherwise, monthly benefit checks are mailed via International Priority Airmail (IPA) directly to the recipient. In countries where IPA is not feasible, the checks are mailed via APO/FPO facilities or pouched to the consular posts.

b. If the checks are sent in bulk shipments to your post, you are then responsible for distributing the checks to the recipients through the local postal service or other appropriate means.

For further information, see 7 FAM 520.

7 FAM 545.2 What if a Benefits Check is not Received?

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

See 7 FAM 523.

a. VA needs to know:

- Name of the beneficiary (veteran, widow, child of veteran, parent of veteran)
- VA claim number or Social Security number of the veteran and the payee number if known (00-veteran, 10-widow, 11-19 or 31 for children, etc)
- Date of the check (EX: January 1, 2002)
- Type of benefit (pension, compensation, education, etc.) if known
- Current address of claimant
- If the address has changed since the previous check was issued, VA will input the new address, reissue the check, and direct it to the corrected address. A change of address must be processed by the 15th of the month to be effective on the next check. **If the replacement check is returned, benefits will be suspended immediately.**

b. What you should do for **bulk shipments**:

- Verify that a payment has been issued with the check list enclosed in the bulk shipment.
- Allow a minimum of 10 calendar days after date of payment to elapse.
- See 7 FAM 523.1.

c. What you should do if the check were sent by International Priority Airmail:

See 7 FAM 523.2.

d. What the Claimant should know:

- If the Department of Treasury finds no indication that the check has been negotiated, they will issue a courtesy replacement check. (It will take up to four weeks or more to replace a current month nonnegotiated check.)

- If the Department of Treasury determines that the missing check was actually negotiated, they will send the payee an image of the check and FMS 3858 Claims Package that includes the FMS 1133 Claim against the United States for the Proceeds of a Government Check
 - If the payee agrees that he/she did in fact sign the check, no further action is necessary. (This usually takes six weeks to provide.)
 - If the payee claims that he/she did not endorse the check and forgery is alleged, the payee must complete the FMS 1133 Claim against the United States for the Proceeds of a Government Check and return it to the address provided. Upon receipt of the claim form, Treasury will adjudicate the claim. If Treasury determines that a forgery has occurred, a settlement check is authorized to the payee or a transfer is authorized to the agency. (Forgery investigations usually take about one year and replacement checks are not issued until Treasury completes the investigation.)

Once a replacement check has been requested, under no circumstances should the beneficiary cash the original check. It should be returned to the Treasury. If both checks are cashed, an overpayment will be created and benefits will be withheld from a future check without notification.

7 FAM 546 Education Benefits

7 FAM 546.1 Who is Eligible?

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

- a. Veterans of the post-Korea conflict period, including current members of the Armed Forces, are eligible.
- b. For education benefits to be paid outside the United States, the beneficiary must be enrolled in a program of study approved by VA.

c. For more information, visit the foreign education web site or contact the following office:

Director, Education Service (225B)
VA Central Office
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420
Telephone: 888-442-4551
FAX: 202-275-2636
E-mail: co223B@vba.va.gov

7 FAM 547 Other Services

7 FAM 547.1 Burial Flags

7 FAM 547.2 Fiduciary Field Investigations

7 FAM 547.3 Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program

7 FAM 547.4 Military Medals and Military Records

7 FAM 547.5 Loan Guaranties

7 FAM 547.1 Burial Flags

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

A burial flag should not be removed from its carton until used for a veteran's funeral.

- a. Foreign Service posts serve as the issuing agents for U.S. burial flags.
 - The number of flags to be maintained at each post is determined by the veteran population in the consular district, but a minimum of two should always be available.
 - VA is authorized to issue only **one flag per deceased veteran**. Once a flag is presented it can't be replaced under any circumstances.
- b. Who is eligible to receive a U. S. burial flag?

The following deceased veterans are eligible to receive a United States flag to drape the casket or accompany the urn. Those who:

- Served in any war.
- Died while on active duty.
- Served after January 31, 1955.
- Served at least one enlistment or had been discharged or released from active service for a disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty.
- Are entitled to retired pay for service in the National Guard or Reserves at the time of death, or would have been entitled to retired pay, but for being under 60 years of age.

Review paragraph seven of instructions for VA Form 21-2008 Application for United States Flag for Burial Services outlining **preference of entitlement** prior to issuance of a flag. Form 21-2008 is available at veterans forms..

Complete VA form 21-2008 before issuing a burial flag. If available, a copy of the death certificate and military separation or discharge document should be included.

c. Are American citizens who die abroad by an act of terrorism (crisis) entitled to a burial flag?

Review "Burial Flags" section in the 12 FAH Appendix 5.

d. What are the authorized uses of the flags?

- Drape the casket of the veteran prior to interment, entombment, or inurement
- Accompany remains of the veteran in transit to the place of final disposition
- Burial purposes in connection with the death of in-service personnel who die at points where armed forces cannot supply such flags in time for burial
- As a memorial after final disposition as indicated on VA Form 21-2008

e. How do I order new flags?

- Order replacement flags periodically or after one has been issued so you always have the required minimum (2) available by completing VA Form 21-2008 and faxing it to the Foreign Desk of your regional office of jurisdiction.
 - Houston Regional Office (Mexico, South and Central America, Caribbean) **713-794-3818**
 - White River Junction Medical Regional Office (Canada) **802-296-5174**
 - Washington Regional Office (All other countries) **202-530-9096**
- Post name and mailing address should be shown in the "Notification of Issuance of Flag" section on the form.

Flags should be stored away from other regular stock of display flags.

For more information, visit VA Burial and Memorial Benefits site.

7 FAM 547.2 Fiduciary Field Investigations

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

a. On occasion, VA may request you to conduct a field visit to a VA beneficiary to determine if he/she is competent to handle his/her funds or to observe daily living in the household when claimant may be competent, but incapacitated. VA will provide specific written instructions, including travel reimbursement procedures, on a case-by-case basis. If the beneficiary is found to be incompetent, VA will request you to assist in the appointment of a fiduciary specifying the necessary documentation at that time.

b. VA may also request you to investigate the fitness and suitability of guardians or other court fiduciaries as well as recognition of legal custodians for minor or incompetent beneficiaries.

7 FAM 547.3 Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

Visit VA Educational Benefits site and VA Foreign Schools site.

7 FAM 547.4 Military Medals and Military Records

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

Visit National Personnel Records Center, Military Personnel Records site.

7 FAM 547.5 Loan Guaranties

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

Loan guaranties are only available in the United States and its territories.

7 FAM 548 NOTIFICATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

7 FAM 548.1 Change of Address

7 FAM 548.2 Report of Death

7 FAM 548.3 Marriage/Birth

7 FAM 548.1 Change of Address

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

Report all changes of address including beneficiary's name, claim number, citizenship, old address, new address, and effective date of new address to the **VA Foreign Desk** by fax or by telegram.

7 FAM 548.2 Report of Death

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

Reports of death including beneficiary's name, claim number, date of death, place of death and information for survivor benefits (name, address and telephone number) should be faxed to the **VA Foreign Desk** (Regional Office of jurisdiction) (See 7 FAM 742.2.3 and 7 FAM 230.) or by telegram.

7 FAM 548.3 Marriage/Birth

(TL:CON-75; 04-27-2004)

Report marriages, birth, and other changes of status that may affect benefits to the VA Foreign Desk (Regional Office of jurisdiction). (See 7 FAM 542.2-3.)

For all other concerns and inquiries regarding the Department of Veterans Affairs benefits and services, visit the VA web site for further information.

7 FAM 549 UNASSIGNED