

Q. As a Veteran , am I eligible for any in home care assistance.
J. Barfield - Sarasota

A. Yes, But,- According to a VA analysis, only 27 percent of veterans and 14 percent of widow(er)s who are likely eligible, actually receive any money from the Veterans Non-Service Connected Improved Pension Benefit Program.

Established to assist qualified veterans, and/or their surviving spouses and family, the Veterans NSC Improved Pension Benefit Program provides financial support that enables veterans to live independently while receiving the quality of care they deserve. In particular, funds are available for aging veterans who need assistance with medical and non-medical care both in the home and in qualified facilities. In many cases, veterans, along with their spouses and family, are unaware this program exists.

We see many clients that are faced with the difficult task of covering their healthcare expenses. If they qualify for these funds, it takes a huge burden off of veterans and their families. This money can be used to ensure they are given access to the care they need.”

To qualify for the Veterans NSC Improved Pension Benefit Programs, a veteran must have 90 days or more of active duty with at least one of those days served during a US-declared war. The benefits are designed for those who meet specific financial criteria and demonstrate a physical need for healthcare.

The Department of Veterans Affairs determines active duty as full-time service, other than active duty for training, as a member of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, or as a commissioned officer of the Public Health Service, Environmental Science Services Administration or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or its predecessor, the Coast and Geodetic Survey.

Other qualifications and considerations:

- Discharge for any reason other than dishonorable conditions
- Over the age of 65 or disabled
- Total financial assets
- Physical condition
- Current marital status (if you are the surviving spouse of a veteran)
- Total gross income versus medical deduction

In addition, many veterans often assume the available benefits are for those who have a service-related disability, not just because they turned 65.

Applicants who plan to seek VA benefits for the first time must submit the Service Discharge Form (DD-214, DD-215, or for WWII veterans, a WD form) and will need to submit the following:

- Veteran's birth certificate
- Veteran's marriage certificate
- Children's birth certificates or adoption papers
- Veteran's death certificate

There are several places to find additional information regarding the application process.

- Department of Veteran Affairs at: 1-800-827-1000 or visit <http://www.vba.va.gov>
- State Veterans Service Officers can be found in Sarasota county at 941-861-2899
- Veterans Online Applications (VONAPP) provides the required forms online at <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/faqs.asp>

In addition, **Comfort Keepers works closely with local VA service officers** who at **no cost to you** , will discuss your situation, request the correct documentation, and review your eligibility. If they find you do not qualify they will give you planning strategies to help you qualify. Once approved, Comfort Keepers can also be the solution for quality in-home care.

You can reach me at 921-4747