## Your Rights to Representation and a Hearing

**Who Can Be My Representative?**

You can choose an employee of a veteran's organization or other service organization which is recognized by VA. On the back of this page we have a list of some service organizations that could represent you free of charge.

If we receive your request for a hearing within 30 days from the date of our letter, we will not make any decisions until we hold the hearing and review the hearing testimony and any evidence presented. After 30 days you may request a hearing, but we may have already made a decision as explained in our letter.

**What Is a Personal Hearing?**

A personal hearing is a meeting where you can talk to us about a decision we have made or a decision we are going to make. In most cases, the person who "hears" your claim will be the person who makes the decision. You should bring evidence to help us understand your side of the story.

**Can I Bring Someone to the Hearing?**

Yes. Besides your representative, you can bring witnesses. A witness is anyone who has personal knowledge about your claim and can give us useful information. If you don't want a representative, but still want someone to help you at the hearing, one of our Veterans Services Representatives (VSRs) can go to the hearing with you. However, you will need to tell us ahead of time so that the VSR can study your case.

**What Does VA Provide for the Hearing?**

Generally the hearing is held at the Regional Office which has your records. We'll provide the room and tape the hearing. Where available, your hearing can also be held at a local VA hospital through a closed circuit TV system. These services are free. *We will not be able to pay for your travel, meals, or other expenses.*

**How Can I Request a Hearing?**

If you'd like a personal hearing, simply write to us and tell us you want one.

**When Must I Request a Hearing?**

If we receive your request for a hearing within 30 days from the date of our letter, we will not make any decisions until we hold the hearing and review the hearing testimony and any evidence presented. After 30 days you may request a hearing, but we may have already made a decision as explained in our letter.

**Will There Be an Overpayment?**

By continuing to pay you at the current rate, we may be overpaying you. If you request a hearing but wish to reduce the possible overpayment, immediately send us a statement asking that we reduce or suspend your benefits as soon as possible.
RECOGNIZED SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Here is a list of national organizations which are approved to help people with their VA claims. You don't have to belong to one of these organizations to get their help, and they won't charge you a fee. If you're looking for one of these organizations and you can't find them in your phone book, you can call us toll free at 1-800-827-1000.

- African American PTSD Association
- American Legion
- American Red Cross
- American Veterans Committee
- AMVETS
- American Ex-Prisoners of War, Inc.
- American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor, Inc.
- American GI Forum, National Veterans Outreach Program
- Army and Navy Union, USA
- Army and Air Force Mutual Aid Association
- Blinded Veterans Association
- Catholic War Veterans of the U.S.A.
- Disabled American Veterans
- Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association
- Fleet Reserve Association
- Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.
- Italian American War Veterans of the United States, Inc.
- Jewish War Veterans of the United States
- Legion of Valor of the United States
- Marine Corps League
- Military Order of the Purple Heart
- National Amputation Foundation, Inc.
- National Association of County Veterans Service Officers, Inc.
- National Veterans Legal Services Program
- National Veterans Organization of America
- Non Commissioned Officers Association of the USA
- Navy Mutual Aid Association
- Paralyzed Veterans of America, Inc.
- Polish Legion of American Veterans, U.S.A.
- Swords to Plowshares, Veterans Rights Organization
- The Retired Enlisted Association
- United Spanish War Veterans of the United States
- Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States
- Veterans of World War I of the U.S.A., Inc.
- Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & the Veterans Coalition
- Vietnam Era Veterans Association
- Vietnam Veterans of America
- National Association of County Veterans Service Officers, Inc.
- National Veterans Legal Services Program
- National Veterans Organization of America
- Non Commissioned Officers Association of the USA
- Navy Mutual Aid Association
- Paralyzed Veterans of America, Inc.
- Polish Legion of American Veterans, U.S.A.
- Swords to Plowshares, Veterans Rights Organization
- The Retired Enlisted Association
- United Spanish War Veterans of the United States
- Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States
- Veterans of World War I of the U.S.A., Inc.
- Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & the Veterans Coalition
- Vietnam Era Veterans Association
- Vietnam Veterans of America

Although agency titles vary, the following States and possessions maintain veterans service agencies which are recognized to help people with their claims. You can look in the state government pages of the phone book under "veterans" to see if your state has a Department of Veterans Affairs or Veterans Affairs Commission.

Alabama
American Samoa
Arizona
Arkansas
California
Colorado
Connecticut
Delaware
Florida
Georgia
Guam
Hawaii
Idaho
Illinois
Kansas
Kentucky
Louisiana
Maine
Maryland
Massachusetts
Minnesota
Mississippi
Missouri
Montana
Nebraska
Nevada
New Hampshire
New Jersey
New Mexico
New York
North Carolina
North Dakota
Northern Mariana Islands
Ohio
Oklahoma
Oregon
Pennsylvania
Puerto Rico
Rhode Island
South Carolina
South Dakota
Tennessee
Texas
Utah
Vermont
Virginia
Virgin Islands
Washington
West Virginia
Wisconsin

Points to Remember:

- If you want a representative, you should let us know who you want. We can send you the necessary forms to appoint your representative.

- If you want a personal hearing, you should write and tell us.