

"Planning for Eldercare" November 11 , 2009

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Long Term Care for Senior Veterans

In the year 1919 President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed November 11 as Armistice Day to honor those Veterans who served during World War I. On November 11, 1954, Armistice Day was proclaimed a legal national holiday and the name was changed to "Veterans Day" to honor all veterans of all wars.

Every November 11, ceremonies are held throughout the United States honoring Veterans of wars. A National Ceremony is held at Arlington Cemetery at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, where the laying of the presidential wreath and military playing of "Taps" is presented. Since its establishment in 1930, the Department of Veterans Affairs has evolved to supporting and aiding the nation's veterans in numerous ways. One of these services for example, the Veterans Health Administration, is the largest single provider of medical care in the United States. Its 22 regions with 154 hospitals and their associated 875 outpatient clinics offer the following services.

- Hospital, outpatient medical, dental, pharmacy and prosthetic services
- Domiciliary, nursing home, and community-based residential care
- Sexual trauma counseling
- Specialized health care for women veterans
- Health and rehabilitation programs for homeless veterans
- Readjustment counseling
- Alcohol and drug dependency treatment
- Medical evaluation for disorders associated with military service in the Gulf War, or
- Treatment for exposure to Agent Orange, radiation, and other environmental hazards
- HISA grants
- Other special benefits

The Department of Veterans Affairs provides three types of long term care services for veterans.

The first are health care benefits provided to veterans who have service-connected disabilities, who are receiving VA Pension or who are considered low income. These services include free medical care, possible free prescription drugs, orthotics and prosthetics, home renovation grants for disabilities, home care, assisted living, domiciliary care, nursing home care, and a possible host of other services or benefits.

The second benefit is state veterans homes. The majority of these homes offer nursing care but some may offer assisted living or domiciliary care. The Department of Veterans Affairs in conjunction with the states helps build and support state veterans homes. Money is provided to help with construction and a federal subsidy of \$72.71 a day is provided for each veteran using state veterans nursing home services. These homes are generally available for most veterans and sometimes their spouses and in some cases for so-called "Goldstar parents." Veterans homes are run by the states, sometimes with the help of contract management. There may be waiting lists in some states.

The third benefit for veterans is disability income programs. The most familiar of these benefits is an income for service-connected disabled veterans called "Compensation." The least known of these is a program officially called "Pension" but popularly known as the "aid and attendance benefit."