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***If Veterans don't help Veterans, who will?***

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# South Dakota State Veteran's Benefits

The state of South Dakota provides several veteran benefits. This section offers a brief description of each of the following benefits.

- [Veteran Housing Benefits](#)
- [Veteran Financial Assistance Benefits](#)
- [Veteran Education Benefits](#)
- [Other State Sponsored Veteran Benefits](#)

## South Dakota Veteran Housing Programs

### State Veterans Homes

The South Dakota Veterans Home is located in Pierre. To be eligible for admission, veterans must be honorably discharged with a period of service that qualifies them for veteran benefits. They must also have been a resident of South Dakota at any time in the five years immediately preceding application and be incapacitated from earning a livelihood. In the case of a married couple, the spouse of the veteran must be admitted with the veteran, unless the veteran is institutionalized, in order to be able to reside at the Home. Costs are based on income.

## South Dakota Financial Assistance Programs

### Property Tax Exemption for Veterans and Their Widow or Widower

Dwellings or parts of multiple family dwellings which are specifically designed for use by paraplegics as wheelchair homes and which are owned and occupied by veterans with the loss, or loss of use, of both lower extremities, or by the unmarried widow or widower of such veteran, are exempt from taxation.

The dwelling must be owned and occupied by the veteran for one full calendar year before the exemption becomes effective. For purposes of this statute, the term "dwelling" generally means real estate in an amount not to exceed one acre upon which the building is located.

In addition, veterans that have been rated as permanently and totally disabled as the result of a service-connected disability may be eligible for up to \$100,000 of their property value to be exempt from property taxes.

### Property Tax Exemption for Disabled Veterans

Up to \$100,000 of the full value of a home that is owned and occupied by a permanently and totally disabled veteran is exempt from taxation. The surviving spouse may also be eligible.

### South Dakota Veterans Bonuses

South Dakota currently offers a bonus of up to \$500 for current or former eligible members of the Armed Forces who were legal residents of the state for no less than six months immediately preceding their period of active duty and who meet certain criteria during one or more of the following periods:

- August 2, 1990 to March 3, 1991 – All active service counts for payment.
- March 4, 1991 to December 31, 1992 – Only service in a hostile area qualifying for the Southwest Asia Service Medal counts for payment.
- January 1, 1993 to September 10, 2001 – Only service in a hostile area qualifying for any United States campaign or service medal awarded for combat operations against hostile forces counts for payment.
- September 11, 2001 to a date to be determined – [OIF/OEF] All active service counts for payment.
- Veterans living in South Dakota may apply through the nearest County or Tribal Veterans Service Officer.

## **South Dakota Education Assistance Programs**

### **Free Tuition for Veterans**

Certain veterans are eligible to take undergraduate courses at a state university without the payment of tuition provided they are not eligible for educational payments under the GI Bill or any other federal educational program.

Eligible veterans may receive one month of free tuition for each month of "qualifying service" with a minimum of one, up to a maximum of four, academic years. Qualifying service is defined as: the amount of time served on active duty between the beginning and ending dates of the particular period of conflict or hostilities during which the veteran earned eligibility for this program.

### **Free Tuition for Children of Veterans Who Die During Service**

Children who are under the age of 25, are residents of South Dakota, and whose mother or father was killed in action or died of other causes while on active duty, are eligible for free tuition at a state supported school, if the deceased parent was a bona-fide resident of this state for at least six months immediately preceding entry into active service.

SDDVA form E-12 "Application for Free Tuition at State Supported Institutions" is available at the schools' financial aids, veterans representative or registrars offices or, they can be obtained from the Division of Veterans Affairs.

### **Free Tuition for Dependents of POW's and MIA's**

Children and spouses of prisoners of war, or of persons listed as missing in action, are entitled to attend a state supported school without the payment of tuition or mandatory fees provided they are not eligible for equal or greater federal benefits.

SDDVA form E-12 "Application for Free Tuition at State Supported Institutions" is available at the schools' financial aids, veterans representative or registrars offices or, they can be obtained from the Division of Veterans Affairs.

### **Reduced Tuition for South Dakota National Guardmembers**

Guard members, who meet the requirements for admission, are eligible for a fifty percent reduction in undergraduate tuition charges at any state supported school for up to a maximum of four academic years or one program of study, approved by the state Board of Education, at any state vocational school upon payment of fifty percent of the tuition charges.

The receipt of federal educational benefits does not affect eligibility for this program.

## **Other South Dakota State Veteran Benefits**

### **Free Certified Copies of Veterans Records**

South Dakota counties may not charge for certified copies of birth, death, marriage, adoption, divorce, guardianship or conservatorship papers when such records are required in support of a claim against any agency of the federal or state government by, or on behalf of, a servicemember or veteran, or the spouse, surviving spouse or dependents of a servicemember or veteran.

### **Burial Allowance for Veterans, Wives or Widows**

A payment of up to \$100 may be paid by the state to help defray the burial and funeral expenses of any honorably discharged veteran or the wife, widow or widower of a veteran when the estate, or immediate family, of the deceased is lacking in funds to pay the expenses. The veteran must have been a citizen of the United States for one year preceding entrance into military service or one year preceding the death. This payment CANNOT be made to another unit of government. The surviving spouse, or relatives, must furnish an affidavit to the C/TVSO that sufficient funds are not available for payment of the expenses.

### **Headstone Setting Fee**

The state will pay \$100 towards the cost of setting a government headstone or marker at the grave of a veteran who was a resident of this state for one year preceding entrance into the military service or one year preceding death.

### **Special License Plates**

A resident veteran owner of a motor vehicle who has a valid South Dakota driver's license and who signs an affidavit attesting to the fact that he or she is an honorably discharged veteran having served on active duty in the armed forces of the United States, may apply for Veteran plates. The fee for the special plates is \$10.00 per set, in addition to registration fees. A \$5.00 mailing fee required for each set of license plates to be mailed.

No special plate renewal fee is charged, but registration fees apply.

The following plates are available to eligible persons:

- Disabled Veteran Plate
- Prisoner of War Plate
- Pearl Harbor Survivor Plate
- Purple Heart Plate

### **Hunting and Fishing Cards for Disabled Veterans**

Certain resident veterans may receive a hunting and fishing card which is valid for four years. Upon purchase of an annual basic game and fish license, the card becomes the equivalency of a resident fishing license, small game stamp and habitat stamp until the expiration of the basic game and fish license. To qualify the veteran must:

1. be rated as totally disabled from service connected injuries OR,
2. be in receipt of the VA "K" award OR,
3. have been held as a Prisoner of War OR,
4. be in receipt of Social Security benefits because of a total disability.

### **Free Admission and Reduced Camping Fees for Veterans**

Certain resident veterans may obtain free admission to any South Dakota state park and are eligible for a fifty percent discount on any camping fee or associated electrical fee. To qualify the veteran must:

1. be totally disabled from service connected disabilities or,
2. be in receipt of the VA "K" award OR,
3. have been held as a Prisoner of War.

Application forms may be obtained from the local park manager or through the Game, Fish and Parks office in Pierre.

### **Special Provisions for Handicapped Hunters**

Individuals who are missing an upper limb, or are physically incapable of using an upper limb or who are confined to a wheelchair may use a crossbow to take game birds and animals once they have obtained a disabled hunter permit. A legally blind, legally licensed individual who possesses a disabled hunter permit and who is physically present and participating in the hunt may claim game birds and animals taken by a designated hunter in accordance with the license or licenses possessed by the handicapped hunter.

Applications are obtained from the Game, Fish and Parks office in Pierre or from a game warden.

Visit the [South Dakota Dept. of Veterans Affairs](#) website for more information on any of these programs.