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If Veterans don't help Veterans, who will?

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Florida State Veteran's Benefits

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

- Housing Benefits
- Employment Benefits
- Education Benefits
- Other State Veteran Benefits

Florida Veteran Housing Programs

Florida State Veterans' Homes Program

The Robert Jenkins, Jr. Assisted Living/Domiciliary Home is a 150-bed Assisted Living Facility (ALF) that provides a special combination of housing, personalized supportive services, and incidental medical care to eligible veterans. Domiciliary care is provided to veterans discharged under honorable conditions. Veterans admitted must be residents of Florida for one year prior to admission and be in need of ALF care. Current admissions information is available through the office of the Home Administrator, County Veteran Service Office, or any of the FDVA offices listed.

Veterans' Nursing Homes of Florida

The Emory L. Bennett Veterans' Nursing Home in Daytona Beach (Volusia County) is a modern and progressive 120-bed facility providing skilled nursing home care and the highest quality of life and medical care to its veteran residents. The Baldomero Lopez Veterans' Nursing Home in Land O' Lakes (Pasco County), provides skilled nursing home care. Sixty of its 120 beds are for residents with dementia/ Alzheimer's disease. A beautiful park setting within the facility grounds is available for residents to enjoy the outdoors. Local veterans and civic groups donate many hours of their time volunteering and interacting with the residents at the Home. The Sandy Nininger Veterans' Nursing Home, in Pembroke Pines (Broward County) opened its doors to its first residents in June 2001. This 120-bed facility accommodates 60 residents with dementia disease. Each dementia/Alzheimer's module has a dining area, a small nutrition area, a centrally located living area, and a screened porch with a gated garden. The Clifford Sims Veterans' Nursing Home, in Springfield (Bay County) accepted its first resident in October 2003. This 120-bed facility offers skilled nursing home and dementia care.

The Douglas Jacobson Veterans' Nursing Home, in Port Charlotte (Charlotte County), opened in January 2004. This 120-bed facility offers skilled nursing home and dementia care. Basic admission requirements for all veterans' nursing homes in Florida include an honorable discharge, Florida residency for one year prior to admission, and certification of need of nursing home care by a VA physician.

Homestead Exemption (Permanent & Totally Disabled)

Any real estate used and owned as a homestead by a veteran who was honorably discharged with a service-connected permanent and total disability and for whom a letter from the United States Government or VA or its predecessor has been issued certifying that the veteran is totally and permanently disabled is exempt from taxation, provided the veteran is a permanent resident of the state on January 1 of the tax year for which exemption is being claimed or on January 1 of the year the veteran died.

The production by a veteran or the spouse or surviving spouse of a letter of total and permanent disability from the United States Government or VA or its predecessor before the property appraiser of the county in which property of the veteran lies shall be prima facie evidence of the fact that the veteran or the surviving spouse is entitled to such exemption.

In the event the totally and permanently disabled veteran pre-deceases his or her spouse and upon the death of the veteran, the spouse holds the legal or beneficial title to the homestead and permanently resides thereon as specified in FS 196.031, the exemption from taxation shall carry over to the benefit of the veteran's spouse until such time as he or she remarries or sells or otherwise disposes of the property. If the spouse sells the property, an exemption not to exceed the amount granted from the most recent ad valorem tax roll may be transferred to his or her new residence as long as it is used as his or her primary residence and he or she does not remarry.

Veterans who are paraplegic, hemiplegic, are permanently and totally disabled, must use a wheelchair for mobility, or are legally blind are exempt from real estate taxation if gross annual household income does not exceed the adjusted maximum allowed. The veteran must be a resident of the State of Florida to qualify. Certificate of such disability from two licensed doctors of this state or from the VA or an award letter from the Social Security Administration to the property appraiser is prima facie evidence of entitlement to such exemption.

Homestead Exemption (10% to 100% BUT not Permanent in nature)

Eligible veterans with service-connected disabilities of 10% or more shall be entitled to a \$5000 property tax exemption. To qualify for homestead exemption a veteran must be a bonafide resident of the state.

Every person who is entitled to homestead exemption in this state and who is serving in any branch of the Armed Forces of the United States may file a claim for homestead exemption. Servicemen unable to file in person may file through next of kin or duly authorized representatives.

Visit the [Florida Department of Veterans Affairs](#) website for contact information and benefits assistance.

Florida Employment Benefits

Veterans' Preference in Employment and Retention

The state and its political subdivisions shall give preference in employment and retention in government positions to veterans who served during a wartime period and separated under honorable conditions, or who are disabled veterans who have compensable service-connected disabilities as well as to a spouse or un-remarried veteran's widow or widower under certain circumstances.

For additional information concerning veterans' preference, visit the [Florida VA's online Vet Preference Overview](#) or contact the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs:

By phone at: (727) 319-7462, Facsimile (727) 319-7780 By email: postd@fdva.state.fl.us

Florida Military Family Employment Advocacy Program

The Military Family Employment Advocacy Program provides advocates located in Florida's One-Stop Career Centers for regions where military bases and communities are located. Persons eligible for assistance through this program include spouses and dependents of active-duty military personnel, activated Florida National Guard members, and activated military reservists. Approximately 37,000 military spouses, not including military spouses of mobilized National Guard Members/Reservists, currently live in Florida. An increase is projected in the military spouse population due to returning and reassigned military members and their families.

Visit the [Florida Department of Veterans Affairs](#) website for contact information and benefits assistance.

Florida Education Benefits

High School Diploma - Korean War Veterans

Effective July 1, 2002, Florida veterans who served during the Korean War may be eligible to receive a high school diploma. Senate Bill 292 provides for the award of a high school diploma to certain Korean War veterans who started high school between 1946 and 1950. Veterans who were inducted into the armed forces between June 1950 and January 1954 and scheduled to graduate between 1950 and 1954 are eligible recipients. The revised law amends s. 232.246, F. S., which originally awarded high school diplomas to World War II veterans.

Veterans who meet the following criteria will be eligible:

- must be a Florida resident;
- inducted into military service between June 1950 and January 1954;
- received an honorable discharge;
- started high school between 1946 and 1950; and
- scheduled to graduate from high school between 1950 and 1954.

Tuition Deferment

Available to any veteran or other eligible student covered under Title 38, U.S.C. Allows one tuition deferment each academic year and an additional deferment when a delay in benefits occurs.

Reduced Tuition for National Guard

Active Florida Guard members in good standing as of June 30, 1997 are exempt from payment of one-half of tuition and fees. Individuals who enlist in the Guard after June 30, 1997 are eligible for full exemption of tuition and fees. Contact your National Guard Unit for details.

Education for Children Of Deceased Or Disabled Florida Veterans

The State of Florida provides scholarships for dependent children of Florida veterans or servicemen who died in action or died from service-connected diseases or disabilities, have been verified by the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs as having service-connected 100% total and permanent disabilities, have been determined to have service-connected total and permanent disability ratings of 100% and are in receipt of disability retirement from any branch of the United States Armed Services, or are classified as prisoners of war or missing in action. Specific residency requirements apply and the veteran must have served during specific wars, conflicts or events.

Visit the [Florida Department of Veterans Affairs](#) website for contact information and benefits assistance.

Other Florida State Veteran Benefits

Certification of Discharge or Separation

The Clerk of the Circuit Court shall record, without cost to the veteran, certificates of discharge or separation from the Armed Forces of the United States.

Disabled Veteran Identification Card

The Department of Veterans' Affairs may issue an identification card to any veteran who is a permanent resident of the state and who has been adjudged by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or its predecessor to have a 100-percent, service-connected permanent and total disability rating for compensation, this could also be a rating of Individual Unemployability from the VA, or who has been determined to have a service-connected total and permanent disability rating of 100 percent and is in receipt of disability retirement pay from any branch of the United States Armed Services, upon the written request of such veteran. Such card may be used by the veteran as proof of eligibility for any benefit provided by state law for 100-percent, service-connected permanently and totally disabled veterans except this card may not be used as proof of eligibility for Exemption of Homesteads. The identification card shall bear a statement that it is unlawful for any person other than the veteran to whom it was issued to use the card.

Hunting and Fishing License

In order to receive a no-cost Resident Disabled Person's Hunting and Fishing Certificate from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, applicants must attach a copy of one of the following certifying him or her as totally and permanently disabled:

- Certification by the U.S. Railroad Retirement Board
 - Certification by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces
 - A Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs 100% Service-connected Disabled Veteran Identification Card (must have a statement of "total and permanent disabled")
 - Florida Department of Labor and Employment Security/AWI Division of Workers Compensation (LES Form DWC-4)
 - An order from a Judge of Compensation claims
 - Written confirmation by the carrier providing Workers' Compensation benefits
- OR
- Documentation of current (dated within the last 12 months) eligibility for Disability Benefits from Social Security Administration.

Applicants must also attach proof of Florida residency as outlined on the application.

No license shall be required for military service personnel who are Florida residents while they are home on leave for periods of 30 days or less.

Active-duty and retired military Florida residents can get a low cost Military Gold Sportsman's License. The license covers hunting, freshwater and saltwater fishing and a variety of associated permits at a greatly reduced cost. The Military Gold Sportsman's License is available at tax collectors' offices only. Applicants must present a current military ID card plus a Florida driver's license or orders showing they are stationed in Florida as proof of eligibility.

Motor Vehicle Military License Plates

Joining the 'Florida Salutes Veterans' and the U.S. Marine Corps license plates already available are new plates for the Army, Navy, Air Force, and the Coast Guard.

Check with your county tax collector to purchase your specialty plate. These tags are among the most affordable and patriotic specialty tags available. \$15 of the \$17 purchase price goes to the Veterans' Homes Trust Fund for maintenance and operation of Florida's five state veterans' nursing homes and one state veterans' domiciliary home.

Disabled Veteran Motor Vehicle License Plate

One free motor vehicle license number plate shall be issued by the department for use on any motor vehicle owned or leased by any disabled veteran who has been a continuous resident of Florida for the last five years or has established a domicile upon application accompanied by proof that:

1. the vehicle was acquired through financial assistance from the VA, or
2. the veteran has been determined by the VA to have a service-connected disability of 100% rating for compensation, or
3. the veteran has been determined to have a service-connected disability of 100% and is in receipt of disability retirement pay from any branch of the uniformed Armed Forces. A plate fee is charged.

Permits/Fees (parking, tolls, building improvements)

No totally and permanently disabled veteran who is a resident of Florida shall be required to pay license or permit fees to any county or municipality in order to make certain improvements to assist with his or her disability on any mobile home owned by the veteran and used as his/her residence. Improvements are limited to ramps, widening of doors, and similar improvements for the purpose of making the mobile home habitable for veterans confined to wheelchairs.

Handicapped Toll Permit - Any handicapped person who has a valid driver's license, who operates a vehicle specially equipped for use by the handicapped, and who is certified by a licensed physician or by the VA Adjudication Officer as being physically disabled and having permanent impairments which impair the person's ability to deposit coins in toll baskets shall be allowed to pass free through all tollgates. A vehicle window sticker will be issued.

Exemption Parking Permit: Persons With Permanent Mobility Problems - A disabled veteran who is a resident of this state and honorably discharged, and has been determined by the VA or the Federal Government to have a service-connected disability rating for compensation of 50% or greater and has a signed physician's statement of qualification is eligible for the permit. The fees are \$1.50 for the initial parking permit, and \$1.50 for renewal parking permit and for each additional renewal parking permit. The fee must be paid to the tax collector of the county in which the fee was generated. The department shall not issue to any one eligible applicant more than two exemption parking permits upon request of the applicant.

Homeless Veterans Program

About one-third of the adult homeless population have served their country in the Armed Services. On any given day, as many as 250,000 veterans (male and female) are living on the streets or in shelters, and perhaps twice as many experience homelessness at some point during the course of a year. Many other veterans are considered near homeless or at risk because of their poverty, lack of support from family and friends, and dismal living conditions in cheap hotels or in overcrowded or substandard housing.

Right now, the number of homeless male and female Vietnam era veterans is greater than the number of service persons who died during that war -- and a small number of Desert Storm veterans are also appearing in the homeless population. At this time, scientific studies indicate that there is no known, direct connection between military service, service in Vietnam, or exposure to combat and any increased risk of becoming homeless. Family background, access to support

from family and friends, and various personal characteristics (rather than military service) seem to be the stronger indicators of risk of homelessness.

Almost all homeless veterans are male (about three percent are women), the vast majority are single, and most come from poor, disadvantaged backgrounds. Homeless veterans tend to be older and more educated than homeless non-veterans. But similar to the general population of homeless adult males, about 45% of homeless veterans suffer from mental illness and (with considerable overlap) slightly more than 70% suffer from alcohol or other drug abuse problems. Roughly 56% are African American or Hispanic.

Benefits Counseling

The FDVA has state Veterans' Claims Counselors co-located with the VA in the Bay Pines Regional Office, and in each VA Medical Center and VA Outpatient Clinic in Florida. Assistance with claims is free (membership is not required) and covers all state and federal veterans' programs.

Commission as a Notary Public

The usual fee shall not be required for the issuance of a Commission as a Notary Public to a veteran who served during a period of wartime service, and who has been rated 50% or more for service-connected disability. Other fees may apply. Visit the [Florida Department of Veterans Affairs](#) website for contact information and benefits assistance.