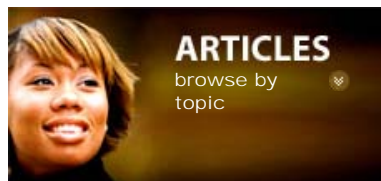




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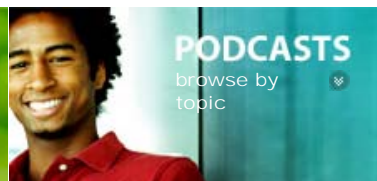
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Caring for Our Veterans: A Hidden Benefit

BY DEBBIE BURAK
 Veteran Advocate & Founder, VeteranAid.org
 May 24, 2007



3 votes

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A little known and under utilized VA benefit can represent up to \$1801.00 a month for a veteran and spouse to help offset the cost of care and residence. These additional monies can make the defining difference in the choices available for proper care and assistance for those in need.

"Aid and Attendance" is a Pension Benefit available through the Department of Veterans' Affairs that can financially assist veterans and their spouses who require assistance with daily living, including eating, dressing, bathing, etc.

Most people think that only those who were injured during service are entitled to compensations, and never think there are other benefits available to them.

I discovered this benefit at the passing of my father who was a WWII veteran, and filed on behalf of my mother as the widow of a veteran. She was awarded Aid and Attendance at a reduced rate of \$976.00 a month as a surviving spouse.

My sister and I were short at least \$1,000 a month for our mother's care, and the discovery of this benefit was a blessing for us. My only regret is that we did not know of it sooner.

Currently it is estimated that more than 2 million spouses alone are not taking advantage of Aid and Attendance simply because they are not aware of its existence.

The numbers are far greater for our veterans who likewise are not aware of the Pension and their entitlement.

Many of us now find ourselves in the position of caregivers to elderly parents. We soon discover that the high cost of care quickly drains financial resources, leaving little to no way to afford care for loved ones. Our choices can end up being limited to none.

Aid and Attendance is part of what the VA calls "Improved Pension." The two other levels of the pension are "Straight Pension", and "Housebound" with Aid and Attendance being the highest level of financial assistance.

There are certain criteria that have to be met in order to qualify for any of the levels:

- › Honorable discharge
- › Must have served during a Congress-approved period of war
- › Meet the financial guidelines
- › Physician's statement required for Housebound and Aid and Attendance

If you or a loved one are a veteran or spouse and are in need of assistance, I urge you to explore your entitlement for any one of these three levels of the Improved Pension.

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My personal experience as a caregiver and having been through this process has led me to do all I can to raise awareness and attention of this benefit. I know what it is to walk in these shoes and I know the heartache. I also know what it is to be desperate and not know where to turn. My hope is that I can make a difference for someone else while paying honor to those who make the sacrifice and pay the price for our freedom.

I have created a website dedicated to providing information, forms and services pertaining to Aid and Attendance. Please visit www.veteranaid.org for a better understanding and explanation of the Aid and Attendance Pension Benefit. Please be sure to read the "One Experience" page of the site for critical insights to dealing with the VA.

Resources for additional information and assistance in filing can be found at: www.vetassist.org.

If you would like to get involved with helping bring this information into your community and help your veterans, please visit www.americanveteransinstitute.org.

God Bless America and those who defend her. I salute you!

[Click to listen an interview about this topic.](#)

Helpful Links

- www.veteranaid.org
- www.vetassist.org
- www.americanveteransinstitute.org