

Florida State Veteran's Benefits

As of July 2020



Watching over and advocating for our state's veterans and their families are the more than 1,100 men and women of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs. Florida has earned a reputation as the most veteran-friendly state in the nation. Our state's veterans bring more than \$18.4 billion federal dollars annually into Florida's economy. Florida has the third largest population of veterans in the nation after California and Texas with more than 1.5 million veterans – 12 percent of the Sunshine State's population 18 and over. If you are a veteran, thank you for your service. If you are the spouse or family member of a veteran, a special thank you for your dedicated support. For more information, call (850) 487-1533.

Fiscal 2017 demographic information from the VA's Veteran Population Projection Model 2016. The VA reports there are 20.0 million veterans living in the United States.

- There are 1,525,400 veterans in the State of Florida. There are 1,381,170 male veterans and 144,229 female veterans. Note: Florida has the third largest veteran population in the nation, behind California with 1,681,730 veterans and Texas with 1,584,844 veterans.
- There are 1,172,800 wartime veterans in the State of Florida.
- There are 352,600 peacetime veterans in the State of Florida.
- There are 61,646 World War II veterans in the State of Florida.
- There are 139,129 Korean War veterans in the State of Florida.
- There are 519,843 Vietnam-era veterans in the State of Florida.
- There are 188,024 Gulf War veterans in the State of Florida. (1990 to 9/11/01)
- There are 177,494 Post-9/11 veterans in the State of Florida (9/12/01 to present)
- There are 789,717 veterans in Florida 65 years of age and over. (There are 761,682 male veterans 65 years of age and older and 28,033 female veterans 65 years of age and older.)

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

- Housing
- Financial Assistance
- Employment
- Education

- Legal
- Recreation
- Other

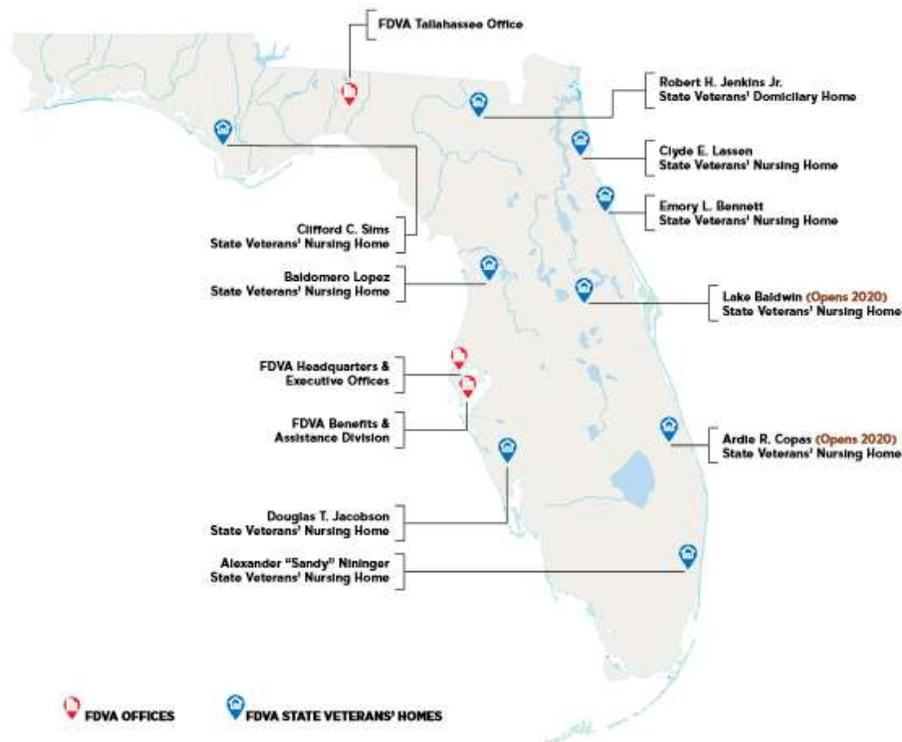
Veteran Housing Programs

Florida State Veterans' Homes Program

Assisted living centers do not provide housing for elders with severe medical conditions that require medical care and monitoring from a doctor or registered nurse. Assisted living offers intermediate care for individuals who cannot reside on their own in an independent living, but do not need the full-time health care services of a nursing home. Veterans must be able to feed and dress themselves. 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 on <http://floridavets.org/benefits-services>. Basic admission requirements for all state veterans' homes include an honorable discharge, Florida residency, and certification of need of assisted living or skilled nursing care as determined by a VA physician. For more information, call (727) 518-3202, Ext. 5562

Veterans' Nursing Homes of Florida

The state of Florida operates 7 Veterans' nursing homes throughout the state. The home locations are:



- **Robert H. Jenkins Jr. Veterans Domiciliary Home** of Florida is a 150-bed assisted living community, located at 751 Se Sycamore Terrace, Lake City, FL 32025 Tel: (386) 758-0600. Assisted living facilities provide care to elderly people who need help with daily tasks such as meal

preparation, mobility, bathing or dressing. A brochure is available at http://www.fdva.org/Homes_Brochures/FDVA_Brochure_Jenkins.pdf.



- **Emory L. Bennett State Veterans' Nursing Home in Daytona Beach** (Volusia County) opened to residents in 1993. The recently renovated 120-bed facility provides skilled nursing care and the highest quality of life and medical care to its veteran residents. Call (386) 274-3460 for more information. Address: 1920 Mason Avenue, Daytona Beach, FL 32117.



- **Baldomero Lopez State Veterans' Nursing Home in Land O' Lakes** (Pasco County) opened to residents in 1999. The 120-bed facility provides skilled nursing care and can accommodate 60 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. Call (813) 558-5000 for more information. Address: 6919 Parkway Boulevard, Land O' Lakes, FL 34639.



- **Alexander "Sandy" Nininger Veterans' Nursing Home in Pembroke Pines** (Broward) opened to residents in 2001. The 120-bed facility offers skilled nursing care and can accommodate 60 residents with dementia/Alzheimer's 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. Call (954) 985-4824 for more information. Address: 8401 West Cypress Drive, Pembroke Pines, FL 33025.



- **Clifford C. Sims State Veterans' Nursing Home in Panama City** (Bay County) opened to residents in 2003. The 120-bed facility offers skilled nursing care and can accommodate 60 residents with dementia/Alzheimer's disease. Call (850) 747-5401 for more information. Address: 4419 Tram Road, Panama City, FL 32404.



- **Douglas T. Jacobson State Veterans' Nursing Home in Port Charlotte** (Charlotte County) opened to residents in 2004. The 120-bed facility offers skilled nursing care and can accommodate 60 residents with dementia/Alzheimer's disease. Call (941) 613-0919 for more information. Address: 21281 Grayton Terrace, Port Charlotte, FL 33954.



- **Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans' Nursing Home in St. Augustine** (St. Johns County) opened to residents in 2010. The 120-bed facility offers skilled nursing care and can accommodate 60 residents with dementia/Alzheimer's disease. Call (904) 940-2193 for more information. Address: 4650 State Road 16, St. Augustine, FL 32092.



- **Ardie R. Copas State Veterans' Nursing Home** in Port St. Lucie (St. Lucie County) is scheduled to open to residents in 2020. When completed, the 120-bed facility will offer skilled nursing care and accommodate residents with dementia/Alzheimer's disease. For more information, call (727) 518-3202, Ext. 5562.



Ardie R Copas State Veterans Nursing Home Concept

- **Lake Baldwin State Veterans' Nursing home** in Orlando (Orange County) is scheduled to open to residents in 2020. When completed, the 112-bed facility will offer skilled nursing care and accommodate residents with dementia/Alzheimer's disease. For more information, call (727) 518-3202, Ext. 5562.



Resident Admission: Basic admission requirements for all state veterans' homes include an honorable discharge, state residency prior to admission, and certification of need of assisted living or skilled nursing care as determined by a VA physician. A resident application package for each facility is available for view and downloading below. For specific questions regarding admissions, please contact the Admissions Coordinator at the numbers listed at <http://floridavets.org/locations/state-veterans-nursing-homes>.

For employment opportunities at the homes, call the FDVA Human Resources Office at (727) 518-3202, Ext. 5615 or visit the People First Website at <https://peoplefirst.myflorida.com>

Financial Assistance

Pension

Aid & Attendance / Dependency & Indemnity Compensation Pension is a needs-based benefit paid to wartime veterans who meet certain age or non-service connected disability requirements.

- Aid and Attendance is an increased monthly pension amount paid to a veteran or surviving spouse. You may be eligible if you require the aid of another person in order to perform activities of daily living, such as bathing, feeding, dressing, toileting or adjusting prosthetic devices.
- Dependency and Indemnity Compensation is a tax-free monetary benefit paid to eligible survivors of military service members who died in the line of duty or eligible survivors of veterans whose death resulted from a service-related injury or disease. A death certificate indicating the cause of death was service-connected is evidence needed by survivors when applying for the DIC benefit. However, the service-connected condition does not have to be the immediate cause of death; it need only be a “significant contributor” to the veteran’s death. Veterans and their spouses should provide copies of the veteran’s VA Disability Rating Letter to their non-VA physicians. Physicians should add the letter to the veteran’s medical record.

For eligibility requirements, contact an FDVA Veterans’ Claims Examiner or County Veteran Service Officer. You may also visit <https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/factsheets.asp> or call toll free (800) 827-1000. Note: Both Social Security and VA pay disability benefits. However, their programs, processes and criteria for receiving benefits are very different. Visit www.socialsecurity.gov/people/veterans or call toll free (800) 772-1213 for more information

G.I. Home Loan Guarantee and Adaptive Housing Grants

The VA may guarantee part of your loan for the purchase of a home, manufactured home, or condominium. In addition, veterans with conventional home loans now have options for refinancing to a VA guaranteed home loan as a result of the Veterans’ Benefits Improvement Act of 2008. The VA also provides grants to veterans with certain permanent and total service-connected disabilities to help purchase or construct an adapted home, or modify an existing home to accommodate a disability. For information, call (877) 827-3702 or visit www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans.

Basic Property Tax Exemptions

Eligible resident veterans with a VA certified service-connected disability of 10 percent or greater shall be entitled to a \$5,000 deduction on the assessment of their home for tax exemption purposes. The veteran must establish this exemption with the county tax official in the county in which he or she resides by providing documentation of this disability. The unremarried surviving spouse of a disabled ex-service member, who on the date of the disabled ex-service member’s death had been married to the ex-service member for at least five years, is also entitled to this exemption.

Additional Property Tax Exemptions

- Any real estate owned and used as a homestead by a veteran, who was honorably discharged and has been certified as having a service-connected, permanent and total disability, is exempt from

taxation if the veteran is a permanent resident of Florida and has legal title to the property on Jan. 1 of the tax year for which exemption is being claimed. (FS 196.081(1))

- Any real estate owned and used as a homestead by the surviving spouse of an Armed Forces member who died from service-connected causes while on active duty is exempt from taxation if the member was a permanent resident of Florida on Jan. 1 of the year in which the member died. (FS 196.081(4)(a))
- If, upon the death of the veteran, the spouse holds the legal or beneficial title to the homestead and permanently resides there, the exemption from taxation carries over to the benefit of the veteran's spouse until such time as he or she remarries, 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 the new residence as long as it is used as the primary residence and the spouse does not remarry. (FS 196.081(3))
- Any partially disabled veteran who is age 65 or older, any portion of whose disability was combat-related, and who was honorably discharged, may be eligible for a discount from the amount of ad valorem tax on the homestead commensurate with the percentage of the veteran's permanent service-connected disability. Eligible veterans should apply for this benefit at the county property appraiser's office. (FS 196.082)
- Any real estate used and owned as a homestead by any quadriplegic is exempt from taxation. Veterans who are paraplegic, hemiplegic, or permanently and totally disabled who must use a wheelchair for mobility, or are legally blind, may be exempt from real estate taxation. Check with your local property appraiser to determine if gross annual household income qualifies. The veteran must be a resident of Florida. (FS 196.101) Service members entitled to homestead exemption in this state, and who are unable to file in person by reason of such service, may file through next of kin or a duly authorized representative. (FS 196.071)

Insurance

- Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI) is a program that allows you to continue life insurance coverage after you separate from service. Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) may be converted to VGLI within one year and 120 days of discharge. For more information, call toll free (800) 419-1473 or visit www.insurance.va.gov.
- Other Insurance -- A veteran with a new service-connected disability, but otherwise in good health, may apply to the VA for up to \$10,000 in life insurance coverage at standard rates. Veterans who receive a new rating of zero percent or greater are eligible for the coverage. The application must be made within two years from the date of being notified of a new service-connected status. The veteran must have received an other than dishonorable discharge and released from active duty after April 25, 1951. Call toll free (800)669-8477 or visit www.benefits.va.gov/insurance/s-dvi.asp.

Employment Benefits

Employment services for veterans, military members and their families are offered through the CareerSource Florida network, which includes the Department of Economic Opportunity, Florida's 24 local workforce development boards and more than 100 career centers. Available services include interview

preparation, resume writing assistance, job and training-related referrals, career planning, vocational guidance, job search and placement assistance, and internet access.

Local Veterans' Employment Representatives conduct outreach to employers and business associations and engage in advocacy efforts with hiring executives to increase employment opportunities for veterans and encourage the hiring of disabled veterans. The Disabled Veterans Outreach Program provides individualized career services to veterans with significant barriers to employment, with the maximum emphasis directed toward serving veterans who are economically or educationally disadvantaged. For more information, visit <https://veteran.employflorida.com/vosnet/Default.aspx> or call (866) 352-2345 (option 2).

Employ Florida Vets

The Florida Veterans Program Portal is an online resource from Employ Florida for veterans' employment and employer recruitment information. The portal provides information and resource links to assist veterans, their families, and employers in accomplishing their employment goals and is available 24/7. For more information, visit <https://veteran.employflorida.com/vosnet/Default.aspx> or call toll free (800) 438-4128.

Troops to Teachers

Troops to Teachers is a DoD career transition program designed to help transitioning service members and veterans begin new careers as K-12 school teachers. Some program participants are eligible for financial assistance up to \$10,000. Interested personnel may apply for the program at www.proudtoserveagain.com. There is no obligation for applying. For information about teaching opportunities in Florida call (833) 358-7667 or email t2t@tcc.fl.edu.

Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) protects the employment rights and ensures the reemployment of veterans, reservists and National Guard members after a period of active service and prohibits employment discrimination because of past, current, or future military obligations. It covers all employers, regardless of size, in the public and private sectors. Call toll free (866) 487-2365 or visit www.dol.gov/vets for more information.

Business License Fee Waivers

The Department of Business and Professional Regulation may waive the initial licensing fee, application fee and unlicensed activity fee for military veterans and their spouses at the time of discharge who apply for a state professional license. The application must be submitted within 60 months after the veteran has been honorably discharged from the U.S. Armed Forces including the Florida National Guard. The waiver does not include examination or other incidental fees. The law applies to new licenses for more than 20 professions under DBPR's jurisdiction, including construction, real estate, certified public accountants and cosmetologists. Visit www.myfloridalicense.com/DBPR/military-services/veterans-services or call (850) 487-1395 for more information.

Health License Fee Waivers

The Florida Department of Health has programs in place to aid veterans in finding employment in health-related fields. The department offers expedited health care practitioner licensure through the Veterans Application for Licensure Online Response (VALOR) system. They also offer expanded licensure fee

waivers for military veterans and their spouses applying for health care licensure in Florida. The department continues to assist county health departments in recruiting military veterans and their spouses to work in health-related fields. If you were honorably discharged within the past 60 months, call (850) 488-0595 or visit www.flhealthsource.gov/valor#Veterans.

Veterans' Preference in Florida

The state, and all political subdivisions of the state, shall give preference in employment, promotions after being deployed and retention. Individuals who qualify for this preference are as follows:

- A disabled veteran who has served on active duty in any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, has received an honorable discharge, and has established the present existence of a service-connected disability that is compensable under public laws administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; or who is receiving compensation, disability retirement benefits, or pension by reason of public laws administered by the VA and U.S. Department of Defense.
- The spouse of a person who has a total disability, permanent in nature, resulting from a service-connected disability and who, because of this disability, cannot qualify for employment, and the spouse of a person missing in action, captured in line of duty by a hostile force, or forcibly detained or interned in line of duty by a foreign government or power.
- A wartime veteran as defined in s. 1.01(14), who has served at least one day during a wartime period. Active duty for training may not be allowed for eligibility under this paragraph.
- The unremarried widow or widower of a veteran who died of a service-connected disability.
- The mother, father, legal guardian, or unremarried widow or widower of a member of the U.S. Armed Forces who died in the line of duty under combat-related conditions, as verified by the U.S. Department of Defense.
- A veteran as defined in s. 1.01(14), F.S. Active duty for training may not be allowed for eligibility under this paragraph.
- A current member of any reserve component of the U.S. Armed Forces or the Florida National Guard.

Veterans must have been honorably discharged as indicated on their DD214 to be eligible for preference. Eligible applicants who meet the requirements for the position are guaranteed preference at every step throughout the hiring process. Public entity employers who advertise for qualifying positions must make the applicant aware that preference is available. The employer must also provide the applicant with information as to what can be done if the veteran believes he/she was denied preference for employment, promotion or retention. An applicant who believes he or she was not afforded employment, promotion or retention preference may file a complaint with the FDVA. The complaint must be made within 60 days from the date a non-select notice was received. The FDVA can investigate and make a determination as to whether a violation has occurred.

For more information, call (727) 518-3202, Ext. 5511, or email veteranspreference@fdva.state.fl.us. You can also mail a detailed complaint to: 11351 Ulmerton Rd, Suite 311-K, Largo, FL 33778-1630.

Florida Veteran Certified Business Enterprises

The Department of Management Services' Office of Supplier Diversity certifies eligible Florida-based veteran-, woman- and minority-owned small businesses. The Office of Supplier Diversity also provides

technical assistance, certification support and pertinent information about state contract opportunities, special events and networking activities. Learn more by visiting www.dms.myflorida.com/osd or call (850) 487-0915. The U.S. Small Business Administration also offers programs and services for veterans seeking to establish or expand small businesses. For more information, call toll free (800) 827-5722.

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment

Veterans may receive Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) services to help with job training, employment accommodations, resume development and job seeking skills coaching. Other services may be provided to assist veterans in starting their own businesses or independent living services for those who are severely disabled and unable to work in traditional employment. For more information, visit www.benefits.va.gov/VOCREHAB/index.asp or call toll free (800) 827-1000.

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 unremarried veteran's widow or widower under certain circumstances. For additional information concerning veterans' preference, visit the Florida VA's online Vet Preference Overview at <https://floridavets.org/benefits-services/employment> 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 <http://floridavets.org/benefits-services/employment> for contact information and benefits assistance.

Veterans Florida

This is a non-profit corporation created by the State of Florida to help veterans find a new career, start a business, or connect to other helpful resources in the Sunshine State. Visit www.veteransflorida.org to learn more.

- *Career Opportunities.* Veteran-friendly businesses in high-growth fields such as aerospace, manufacturing, logistics, research and development, and technology seek to hire veterans and provide them with the training they need to build a long and fruitful career. Veterans Florida has Career Specialists to help veterans, transitioning servicemembers, and members of the National Guard and Reserves translate their military skills for employers, assist with resume and interview preparation, and get placed into skills-based jobs. Visit www.veteransflorida.org/careers to submit your resume.

- *Entrepreneurship.* The skills you learned in the military like discipline, attention to detail and leadership directly correlate to being a successful entrepreneur. Veterans Florida offers a world-class and proven entrepreneurship program just for veterans. They've joined forces with top Florida universities, colleges and startup incubators to deliver the Veterans Florida Entrepreneurship Program, a training initiative for veterans seeking to start their own business. As part of the program, veterans will gain access to small business development resources. Visit www.veteransflorida.org/entrepreneurship to sign up

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

Florida provides four-year college educational opportunities for dependent children and spouses of veterans who died from a service connected disability or who are 100% percent service-connected totally and permanently disabled veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. For more information, call toll free (888) 827-2004. Dependent children of service members Missing In Action or Prisoners Of War may also be eligible for tuition benefits.

Visit <http://floridavets.org/benefits-services/education> for contact information and benefits assistance.

Veteran Legal Benefits

Legal Advice & Counsel

The Governor's Initiative on Lawyers Assisting Warriors (GI LAW) draws from the talent of Florida's leading law firms to provide pro bono services for military members. There are discussions to expand this service to veterans in the future. For more information, visit

- <https://www.enterpriseflorida.com/floridadefense/lawyers-assisting-warriors/Legal>
- www.va.gov/ogc/docs/LegalServices.pdf [Clinics in VA Facilities]

American Bar Association resources for veterans

- www.americanbar.org/groups/committees/veterans_benefits ABA Veterans Legal Services Initiative
- The Florida Bar, in conjunction with the American Bar Association, administers a free virtual legal advice clinic for Floridians. Visit: <https://florida.freelegalanswers.org>.

Certification of Discharge or Separation

You may request a copy of your military service record by visiting the National Archives online at www.archives.gov/veterans. At a veteran's request, the Clerk of the Circuit Court shall record, without cost, that portion of certificates indicating character of discharge, separation, or service in accordance with Section 28.222(3) (d), Florida Statutes. CAUTION: Once on file, documents become official court records and are open to the public. To remove a military discharge record from the official court record, submit your request to the Court Clerk's office. A veteran may also request an exemption from inspection or copying of identification and location information in public records under Section 119.071(5)(k), Florida Statutes.

Legal Aid for Veterans

When you call the Florida Veterans Legal Helpline at (866) 486-6161 [M-F 9am-4:30pm] you will speak to a screener who will determine your eligibility and set your appointment with an attorney. The Helpline can assist with Landlord-Tenant Matters, Consumer Credit Issues, Foreclosure, Divorce/Child Support, Drivers Licenses/ID cards, Social Security, Public Benefits, Discharge Upgrades, VA Benefits Other Civil Legal Matters (No Criminal or Traffic Matters).

Veterans Courts

Veterans returning from combat may suffer from post-traumatic stress or may have difficulty reintegrating into society. Due to alienation and lack of support, some veterans fall into drug and alcohol abuse or develop mental health issues. Thirty Veterans Courts in Florida have been established as of July 2018 to address these issues. Section 394.47891, Florida Statutes, established the T. Patt Maney Veterans' Treatment Act, which authorizes a veterans' court with the purpose of addressing the substance abuse and mental health needs of veterans within the criminal justice system. Successful completion of Veterans Court has helped decrease the recidivism rates of its participants through the proper diagnosis and treatment of mental health issues and as a result of the supportive roles mentors play in the process. Recent legislation has expanded the pool of eligible veterans. There is a helpful Veterans Resources Guide for the Florida State Court System at www.flcourts.org/content/download/217060/1968306/VETERANS_RESOURCE_GUIDE.pdf.

Veteran Recreation Benefits

State Park Admission

- The Florida Department of Environmental Protection provides a 25-percent discount on the purchase of Individual and Family annual passes to Florida's State Parks for all active duty and honorably discharged veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces, National Guard or Reserve units of the U.S. Armed Forces or National Guard.
- Honorably discharged veterans with service-related disabilities are eligible to receive a free-for-life Military Entrance Pass.
- Surviving spouses/parents of the U.S. military who have fallen in combat are eligible to receive a free-for-life Military Entrance Pass.
- Discounted annual passes and the Military pass can only be obtained at a Florida state park with a staffed ranger station, ticket counter or museum. For specific details regarding proof of eligibility, call (850) 245-2157 or visit www.FloridaStateParks.org.

County and Municipal Parks

- County and municipal departments of parks and recreation provide a full or partial discount on park entrance fees to current military service members, honorably discharged veterans, service-connected disabled veterans and the surviving spouse or parents of a military service member who died in combat. Consult your local county or municipal park for details.

Hunting and Fishing License

- The Military Gold Sportsman's License is available for a reduced fee of \$20 to any resident who is an active or retired member of the U. S. Armed Forces, U. S. Armed Forces Reserve or National Guard upon submission of a current military ID card. For more information, visit <https://myfwc.com/license/recreational/military-gold>. The license is available through an online verification process at www.GoOutdoorsFlorida.com. The license may also be obtained at Florida tax collectors' offices with proof of residency and a current military identification card.
- State hunting and fishing licenses and permits shall be issued without fees for five years to any veteran who is a Florida resident, certified or determined to be 100% totally and permanently disabled by the VA or the U.S. Armed Forces, or who has been issued a valid disabled veteran ID card by FDVA. For more information, visit <https://myfwc.com>.

Operation Outdoor Freedom

This program sponsored by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services provides wounded veterans with the outdoor activities that they enjoy at no cost. Designated state and agricultural lands throughout Florida grant qualified veterans with unique opportunities for recreation and rehabilitation. The Florida Forest Service, within the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, provides hundreds of veterans with the Operation Outdoor Freedom experience. For more information, call (863) 578-1894 or visit www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Florida-Forest-Service/Recreation/Operation-Outdoor-Freedom.

Other

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.

Veteran Designation on Driver License

Florida veterans can add a veteran designation to their driver license or ID card by visiting any Florida driver license office, to include those operated by county tax collectors. Requirements:

- Present a discharge document which shows an Honorable or Under Honorable Conditions discharge from active duty;
- Visit www.flhsmv.gov/driver-licenses-id-cards/what-to-bring to ensure you have all other documents.

Veterans who need to obtain a copy of their DD-214 may at www.archives.gov/veterans request it online. While renewing or replacing a driver license or ID card, veterans may also voluntarily request information on veterans' benefits be forwarded to them

Driver License & State ID Fee Exemptions

Any veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces who has been issued a valid identification card by the Department of Veterans Affairs in accordance with Section 295.17, Florida Statutes, has been determined by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or its predecessor to have a 100% total and permanent service-connected disability rating for compensation, or has been determined to have a service-connected total and permanent disability rating of 100%, is in receipt of disability retirement pay from any branch of the United States Armed Services, and who is qualified to obtain a driver's license under this chapter is exempt from certain driver license fees. The Veteran must present a card or letter from the Veterans Administration stating 100 percent total and permanent service-connected disability rating for compensation, or a service-connected total and permanent disability rating of 100 percent. (LR24.4a) However, some reinstatement fees are required. The Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles or a county tax collector may issue or renew a state ID card to a person who presents evidence that he or she is homeless without payment of fees. A nominal fee may apply in offices operated by county tax collectors. Homeless veterans may prove their status with a letter from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs that establishes eligibility in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing Program, known as HUD-VASH

Motor Vehicle Military License Plates

Florida is honored to provide military license plates to individuals that have served our country. All military plates except the Medal of Honor plates are available at a local [motor vehicle service center](#). Requests to order Medal of Honor, Air Force Cross, Navy Cross, Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, and World War II Veteran plates MUST be submitted to the Department for processing. The mailing address is:

Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles
 Direct Mail
 2900 Apalachee Parkway, MS #72
 Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Personalized license plates may be ordered in person at motor vehicle service center throughout Florida. The cost is an additional \$15 annual fee for each personalized license plate, and Application for Personalized License Plate (HSMV form 83043) <https://www.flhsmv.gov/pdf/forms/83043.pdf> will need to be completed and brought to a local office for processing. The fees for specialized military plates are indicated on this form. At https://www.flhsmv.gov/pdf/specialtyplates/military_brochure.pdf the Florida DMC has available the following specialty military plates for veterans and their supporters as incited in their brochure



Disabled Veteran Motor Vehicle License Plate

A veteran discharged honorably or under honorable conditions who has been a resident of Florida continuously for the past five years or who has established a domicile in Florida, as provided by FS 222.17, may apply for one free disabled veteran “DV” license plate for an owned or leased vehicle. The veteran must provide proof of a service-connected 100-percent disability rating or that the vehicle was acquired through VA financial assistance. Note: Free license plates with a wheelchair emblem are available for those veterans permanently confined to a wheelchair and who otherwise qualify for a DV plate. Service charges

may apply (FS 320.084). For eligibility requirements and more information, call (850) 617-2000 or visit <http://www3.flhsmv.gov/dmv/Proc/rs/RS-17.pdf>.

Parking for Disabled Veterans

Parking spaces for persons with disabilities are for the exclusive use of individuals who have permanent or temporary impairments. (F.S. 553.5041(3)). Disabled veterans who have been issued a “DV” plate may park in designated handicapped parking spaces. Disabled veterans with a mobility impairment may apply for the disabled parking plate with the wheelchair emblem to avoid possible fines and penalties.

No state agency, county, municipality or agency thereof may charge the driver of a vehicle displaying a “DV” license plate any fee for parking on public streets, highways or in any metered parking space. There are exemptions to this benefit, which may be found in Florida Statute 316.1964. Recently passed legislation also prohibits the governing body of each publicly owned or publicly operated airport from charging parking fees to vehicles displaying certain disabled veteran license plates

Handicapped Toll Permit

Licensed drivers who operate a vehicle specially equipped for the handicapped, and are certified by a licensed physician or the VA as having permanent upper limb impairments/disabilities substantially affecting their ability to deposit coins in toll baskets, shall pass free through all toll gates. A window sticker from the Florida Department of Transportation must be obtained and displayed.

Homeless Veterans Program

Homelessness among veterans in Florida has been effectively cut in half since 2011. A significant cause for Florida’s substantial decrease in the rate of homelessness among veterans are national initiatives to end veteran homelessness. In Florida, millions of dollars have been invested through VA Supportive Services for Veteran Families grants, as well as HUD VA Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers that provide long-term rental assistance to help homeless veterans with high needs obtain and sustain permanent housing.

Florida’s Homeless Veterans Coordinator can be reached by calling (727) 575-8136. For other information/contact sources refer to the following:

- <http://www.va.gov/homeless> VA Website for Homeless Veterans
- <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/homelessness> Florida Department of Children and Families
- <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/homelessness/council> Florida Council on Homelessness
- <https://www.visn8.va.gov/VISN8/services/homeless/index.asp> VISN 8 Homeless Veterans Outreach

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.
- Information on current federal, state and local veterans’ programs, entitlements and referral services is also available in Florida through a network of County Veteran Service Offices. The counselors are trained and accredited annually by the Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs. All services are provided free of charge. For a full list of offices plus email addrees refer to <https://floridavets.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/CVSO-Directory-May-14-2020.pdf>.

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.

Burial

The VA provides honorably discharged veterans, spouses and dependents with burial in a National Cemetery at no cost. Cremated remains are also accepted. Eligible spouses and dependents may be buried in a national cemetery if they predecease the veteran. Burial benefits available for veterans buried in a private cemetery may include a Government headstone, marker or medallion, a burial flag and a Presidential Memorial Certificate, at no cost to the family. Some veterans may also be eligible for Burial Allowances. There are not any VA benefits available to spouses and dependents buried in a private cemetery. The VA does not make funeral arrangements. For More Information call toll free (800) 697-6947 or visit <http://www.cem.va.gov> for more information. Florida currently has nine National Cemeteries which are listed below:

Cemetery	Address	Contact	Burial Space
Barrancas National Cemetery	1 Cemetery Road Pensacola, FL 32508	Phone: 850-453-4108 FAX: 850-453-4635	Open
Bay Pines National Cemetery	10000 Bay Pines Boulevard North St. Petersburg, FL 33708	Phone: 727-319-6479 FAX: 727-319-6490	Cremation Only
Cape Canaveral National Cemetery	5525 U.S. Highway 1 Mims, FL 32754	Phone: 321-383-2638 FAX: 321-383-2642	Open
Florida National Cemetery	6502 S.W. 102nd Avenue Bushnell, FL 33513	Phone: 352-793-7740 FAX: 352-793-9560	Open
Jacksonville National Cemetery	4083 Lannie Road Jacksonville, FL 32218	Phone: 904-766-5222 FAX: 904-766-5980	Open
Sarasota National Cemetery	9810 State Road 72 Sarasota, FL 34241	Phone: 877-861-9840 FAX: 941-922-3457	Open
South Florida National Cemetery	6501 S. State Road 7 Lake Worth, FL 33449	Phone: 561-649-6489 FAX: 561-649-3948	Open
St. Augustine National Cemetery	104 Marine Street St. Augustine, FL 32084	Phone: 904-766-5222 FAX: 904-766-5980	Closed
Tallahassee National Cemetery	5015 Apalachee Parkway Tallahassee, FL 32311	Phone: 850-402-8941 FAX: 850-402-4099	Open

Florida Veterans Benefits Guide

At <http://floridavets.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/FDVA-Benefits-Guide.pdf?v=20182> can be seen the 2020 Edition of the Florida Veterans Benefits Guide provided courtesy of the Florida Veterans Association.

Visit the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs website <http://floridavets.org> for contact information and benefits assistance.

[Source: <https://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-state-benefits/florida-state-veterans-benefits.html> | July 2020 ++]