

Service-Connected Disability

Bent County / Veterans Services

WHAT IS A SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITY?

Disability compensation is a monthly payment made to a veteran who has a disability for a disease or injury that was incurred or aggravated by service in the armed forces. Payments are based on the degree of disability. VA pays additional allowances for your dependents if your disabilities are evaluated as 30 percent or more disabling. A special monthly compensation rate may be authorized for veterans whose service-connected disabilities are very severe and meet certain statutory requirements. Service connection for a disability may be granted based on the following conditions:

A presumption of service connection may also be granted for certain chronic and tropical diseases under certain circumstances, even if the conditions were not manifested or diagnosed during active service.

Service connection may also be established for a secondary disability or disease which is proximately the result of a service-connected disease or injury.

A service-connected disability may entitle you to additional benefits such as VA medical care, vocational rehabilitation, adaptive equipment/homes, etc.

Important Note: When a service connection for a disability or disease has been established and the condition worsens, a claim for an increase of the rating should be filed.

TOTAL DISABILITY

Total disability will be found to exist when there is an impairment of mind or body which is certain to continue throughout the life of the disabled veteran and renders it impossible for the average person to follow a substantially gainful occupation. A single or combined disability that is ratable at 100%.

Note: There are specific benefits that apply when a rating is classified as total and permanent.

INDIVIDUAL UNEMPLOYABILITY

Individual unemployability may be applied for when there is an exceptional disability factor that substantially interferes with the veteran's ability to sustain gainful employment. A veteran must meet one of the following criteria:

- 1) Have one service-connected disability rated at 60% or more
- 2) Have two or more service-connected disabilities totaling 70% combined, with one that is rated at least 40% and unable to follow gainful employment because of the service-connected disability.

TEMPORARY 100% RATING FOR CONVALESCENCE

Hospitalization - A total 100% temporary disability rating will be assigned, without regard to the rating schedule, when a service-connected disability has required hospitalization treatment by the Department of Veterans Affairs, for a period more than 21 days.

Surgery - A total 100% temporary disability rating may be assigned when your service-connected disability resulted in surgery, post hospital convalescence, immobilization with cast, or surgery of a major joint. When the requirements are met, the rating will be effective from the first day of hospitalization and will continue for a period of 1, 2, or 3 months. Extensions may be granted under certain circumstances.

SPECIAL MONTHLY COMPENSATION (SMC Awards):

Loss of Use: A special month compensation is payable in addition to the basic rate of compensation for the anatomical loss OR loss of use of body members or function, due to service-connected disability. Examples include: hand, foot, eyes, paired organs or extremities, creative organs, buttocks, kidneys, loss of speech (aponia), and deafness.

Housebound Benefits: Housebound is an increased monthly pension amount paid to a claimant who is substantially confined to his or her home because of permanent disability. Additionally, if you are a Veteran, you may qualify for the increased housebound amount if:

- ❖ You have a single permanent disability evaluated as 100 percent disabling AND, due to such disability, you are permanently and substantially confined to your immediate premises, OR,

- ❖ You have a single permanent disability evaluated as 100 percent disabling AND, another disability, or disabilities, evaluated as 60 percent or more disabling.

You may not receive enhanced or special monthly pension without first establishing eligibility for VA pension. However, because enhanced pension is based upon a higher income limit, a claimant may be ineligible for basic pension due to excessive income but may be eligible for increased pension benefits. You may not receive pension at the A&A and Housebound rate at the same time.

Aid and Attendance: Aid and Attendance will be considered when the veteran is so nearly helpless that they are unable to care for themselves, such as dressing, undressing, keeping clean, feeding, attending to the wants of nature, frequent adjustment of special prosthetic or orthopedic appliances, or to protect them from the hazards and dangers incident to daily living. Conditions requiring this care must be service connected.

When a veteran needs a higher level of care (hospitalization, nursing home, or institutional care) because of his or her service-connected disabilities, a higher level of monthly aid and attendance allowance may be granted.