

State of Connecticut Benefits Information

Dear Veteran,

In 1863, Mr. Benjamin Fitch, a wealthy Connecticut businessman, promised soldiers recruited for Connecticut Regiments serving in the Civil War that he would care for them should they be injured during their military service and care for the families of soldiers killed in the war. This promise led to the establishment in Darien, CT of the Fitch Home for Veterans which was incorporated by the Connecticut legislature in 1864. The “Home” was the first in the history of the United States to offer shelter and support for soldiers of war, their widows and orphans. This very compassionate and humanistic concept was soon adopted by other states and evolved into a national network of homes which were the forerunner of today’s Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

We have assembled this Guide to assist you in learning about the benefits and entitlements you have earned as a result of your military service to this Nation. We want to point out that these items change constantly, so we have provided website information and contact phone numbers to help you access the most up-to-date information on the programs and service available to you. Due to the brevity of this booklet, however, it must be understood that it serves only as a guide in an attempt to summarize benefits and programs. We hope that you find this information helpful. If you have questions, please contact us for additional assistance.

It is the Mission and great honor for this Department to serve those who have served our nation.

Sincerely,

Linda S. Schwartz

*Linda S. Schwartz, RN, DrPH, FAAN
Major USAF (Ret.)
Commissioner*

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Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs

The Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs was created by the General Assembly in 1987. The Commissioner is appointed by the Governor and is responsible for the administration of the Department. The mission of the Department is “serving those who served” by assessing the needs of veterans as they emerge and developing resources which address these needs. Within the Department there are four distinct organizational offices:

- **Office of the Commissioner**
- **Office of Advocacy and Assistance**
- **The Veterans’ Home in Rocky Hill**
- **Connecticut State Cemetery System**

The Office of the Commissioner is tasked with administrative authority for the Department, outreach to veterans and community agencies, liaison with legislature, statutory and legislative authorities and veteran service organizations.

The Office of Advocacy and Assistance is responsible for assisting veterans and their families to access benefits and entitlements.

The Veterans’ Home in Rocky Hill provides direct care to veterans in need of rehabilitative services, care for chronic disease, substance abuse treatment and hospice care. A unique feature of the Home is our residential program for low income and homeless veterans.

The Connecticut State Cemetery System consists of three state cemeteries, Col. Raymond Gates Cemetery located in Rocky Hill, Connecticut State Veterans’ Cemetery located in Middletown, and Spring Grove Cemetery located in Darien, which was closed for internment in 1964.

Office of Prime Responsibility

DOVA: Commissioner of Veterans’ Affairs appointed by the Governor of Connecticut, confirmed by the General Assembly.

Services and Programs

DOVA:

- 1 Health Care Facility
- 1 Substance Abuse Treatment Facility (Veterans’ Recovery Center)
- 1 Domiciliary
- 3 Cemeteries, Darien, Middletown and Rocky Hill
- 5 District Offices located in each Congressional District and 11 Satellite Offices throughout the state for the Office of Advocacy and Assistance

Area of Responsibility

DOVA: 310,000 Connecticut Veterans



Definition of a Veteran

Connecticut statutes contain several definitions of the term “veteran.” Some definitions exist especially for particular benefits programs. If not otherwise specifically defined, however, eligibility is determined according to the general definition that defines a veteran as an individual honorably discharged or released under honorable conditions from active duty in the armed forces.

Some benefits require ninety (90) days of active duty during defined periods of war in order to qualify, unless the veteran was separated earlier due to a service-connected disability or the period of war lasted less than 90 days. Certain veterans must have served in a combat or combat-support role (see below). The law lists relevant periods of war ranging from the Spanish-American War to the Persian Gulf War. These periods of war are defined in CGS Sec. 27-103(a).

STATE OF CONNECTICUT VETERANS' BENEFITS

Male and female veterans are eligible for state benefits in a variety of areas. However, *eligibility requirements may vary* according to the benefit program:

- Admission to Connecticut Veterans' Home
- Burial in Connecticut's Veterans' Cemetery
- Educational Benefit/Tuition Waivers
- Employment
- Motor Vehicles Waiver
- Retirement
- Property Tax Exemptions
- The Soldiers', Sailors' and Marines' Fund

BURIAL

Any veteran discharged with other than a dishonorable discharge is eligible for burial in a state veterans' cemetery. (CGS Sec. 27-122b) Spouses are also eligible for this benefit.

EDUCATION

State law provides that tuition fees at state educational institutions be waived for certain veterans and certain dependents. (CGS Sec. 10a-77)

Approved institutions for this benefit are:

- State Regional Community/Technical Colleges
- State Universities

In order to be eligible for a tuition waiver, one must:

- Be a veteran who served 90 days of active duty during a period of war as defined in (CGS Sec. 27-103); and
- Have been accepted to an approved institution; and
- Be a Connecticut resident at the time of acceptance to the institution. (CGS Sec. 10a-77, -99d, -105e)
- A veteran's dependents can also qualify for tuition waiver if the veteran is declared missing in action while serving in the armed forces after January 1, 1960. (CGS Sec. 10a-77(d))

High School Diplomas and Veterans of WWII

Local Boards of Education may award diplomas to those WWII veterans who did not receive them when they left high school before graduation for military service. (PA 00-124)

EMPLOYMENT

An employee who leaves any public authority or public agency to enter the armed forces can be reinstated in their former position. Veterans must reapply within ninety (90) days following receipt of a certificate from the armed forces confirming satisfactory service. (CGS Sec. 7-462)

For classified competitive state exams, a *wartime* veteran **eligible** for or receiving VA compensation receives an additional ten (10) points. A *wartime* veteran **not eligible** for VA compensation or pension receives five (5) additional points. A spouse of a qualified veteran is also eligible for additional points. However, to qualify, the veteran or spouse must achieve a passing grade on the examination score. If an honorably discharged veteran has served in a military action for which he/she received, or is entitled to receive, a campaign badge or expeditionary medal, he/she qualifies for five (5) additional points if they receive a passing grade on their examination. (CGS Sec. 5-224)

On a competitive municipal examination, a *wartime* veteran **eligible** for VA compensation or a pension, who has received a passing score, receives ten (10) additional points.

A *wartime* veteran **not eligible** for compensation or a pension, who has received a passing score, receives five (5) additional points. (CGS Sec. 7-415)

MOTOR VEHICLES

State law provides for free motor vehicle registration and special plates to **former prisoners of war and recipients of the Medal of Honor**. (CGS Sec. 14-21d)

Veterans, who were state residents at the time of induction and who apply within two (2) years of receiving an honorable discharge, are exempt from paying for an operator's license and examination fees for **one (1)** licensing period. (CGS Sec. 14-50(c))

State law also provides that fees may be waived for the following registration items, subject to a formal determination by the Department of Motor Vehicles:

- Special License plates for disabled veterans
- Special fee license plates for certain disabilities (*loss of use or loss of limb, or blind*) handicapped and overtime parking.
- If receiving auto grant from the VA or Medal of Honor recipient, exemption from registration fees. (CGS Sec. 14-254)

RETIREMENT

Members of The Municipal Employees' Retirement System, who leave municipal employment to enter the armed forces while the United States is at war, engaged in hostilities, or during national emergencies and are re-employed by the municipality within six (6) months of discharge, are credited with the period of service as though they had been continuously employed. This six-month limitation can be extended due to service-related disability. (CGS Sec. 5-180)

PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS

An exemption is the reduction of the assessed value of the property for tax purposes. (CGS Sec. 12-81)
It is not a reduction in the tax.

Veterans, who have ninety (90) days of *wartime* service, including Merchant Marines, who served during WWII, are eligible for a \$1,500 exemption for property tax purposes (e.g., real property or automobiles). You have the option to choose to apply this exemption to your real estate or automobile tax. Certain veterans, who do not own real property or a motor vehicle, may be eligible for a tax refund if they are leasing a motor vehicle.

Veterans below a certain income level and/or service connected disabled veterans are eligible for additional property tax exemptions (up to \$10,000 for paraplegics). Surviving spouses of veterans may also be eligible for this benefit. Contact your municipality's Tax Assessor Officer for specific details. (CGS Sec. 12-81g, 12-81(19)(20)(21))

Indexing Exemption

Towns that evaluate after October 1988 must adjust their veterans' property tax exemptions above statutory limits. The adjustment must be proportionate to the change in the value of the town's grand list following revaluation. (CGS Sec. 12-62g)

THE SOLDIERS', SAILORS' AND MARINES' FUND

The Soldiers', Sailors' and Marines' Fund (SSMF) is a state fund administered by the American Legion for the purpose of providing temporary financial assistance for veterans with ninety (90) days of *wartime* service, who are disabled, unemployed or for sickness. An applicant must be a resident of the State of Connecticut at the time of application for benefits. SSMF provides funding for emergency needs such as clothing, food, medical and surgical aid, and general care and relief. For further information please call **860-953-4345**.

VETERANS' HOME at ROCKY HILL, CT

The Department has a health care center with a capacity of 250 beds, a 50-bed substance abuse recovery program and a 500-bed Residential Program. Professional services are provided by staff physicians, Advanced Practice Registered Nurses, OT, PT, RT, dieticians and social workers are augmented by community specialists, as well as, networking to local VA and major area hospitals when appropriate. By Statute, veterans who are able to pay in whole or in part for programs or services determined by the applicable fee schedule will receive a monthly bill for such services rendered. (CSG Sec. 27-108[c])

This program has adopted a rehabilitative model of care based on a definition developed by the noted Connecticut nurse theorist, Virginia A. Henderson (Army School of Nursing):

“To assist the individual, sick or well, in the performance of those activities contributing to health or its recovery or to a peaceful death that they would perform unaided if they had the strength, the will or knowledge. And, to do so in such a way as to help them gain independence as rapidly as possible.”

This facility comes under the authority of the State of Connecticut and consists of Health Care, Residential and Rehabilitative Services. Eligibility requirements for the Residential and Rehabilitative Service Program and the Health Care Facility include:

- Any veteran discharged with other than a dishonorable discharge is eligible as defined by state statutes
- A current resident of the State of Connecticut

HEALTH CARE CENTER SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS

The Veterans' Home at Rocky Hill features a 163 bed long term care facility. The health care facility has seven units and offers specialty programs for dementia care, respite care, assisted living and hospice care. Applications are required in advance (including verification of military discharge). Room accommodations are scheduled as vacancies occur and most veterans reside in rooms with multiple roommates. Medicaid (Title XIX) or private payment is required. Billing statements are provided monthly. Billing rate is reviewed/revised annually. Rehabilitative and supportive services include:

Alzheimer's Unit
Hospice Program
Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Services:
Occupational, Physical, Therapeutic, Recreational and Speech Therapy
Respite Care
Social Work

Alzheimer's Unit

The Special Care Unit is an 18-bed unit, which provides a safe, secure environment for ambulatory patients with dementia. Activity based care revolves around encouraging patients to participate in purposeful, meaningful activities, building on patient strengths and modifying activities to meet patient needs. Behavioral interventions include establishing routines, simplifying tasks, redirecting and providing environmental controls. Communication, coordination and cooperation with the health care team caregivers, family and patients are a crucial part of our Special Care Unit.

Hospice Program

Initiated in August 1994, this program provides for specialized medical, psychological and spiritual needs of terminally ill veterans and their families. Life expectancy is anticipated to be six (6) months or less.

Respite Care

This program offers scheduled temporary care to eligible veterans, who are receiving care in the home by family members or significant others. Advance arrangements **must** be made. Contact our Social Work Department at 860-721-5884.

Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Services

Those with recent surgery, who need additional care before they are able to return to fully independent living, may use this program.

Physical therapy services are available to any resident veteran in need. The primary care physician or the consulting physiatrist completes an examination and prescribes the appropriate physical therapy. This can include such interventions as ultrasound, heat/ice, anodyne light therapy, whirlpool spinal integration, myofascial release, pre and post operative exercise programs, balance and gait assessments, functional assessments, wheelchair or other assistive device assessment, custom molded shoe inserts, prosthetic evaluation and prescription, home setting evaluations and patient and family education.

The Speech-Language Pathology Department evaluates and provides rehabilitative services to patients with communication disorders, including impairments in speech, language, voice, memory and cognition. Speech-Language Pathology services also evaluate and treat swallowing disorders and conduct Modified Barium Swallow studies.

The Social Work Department provide assistance to veterans and their families in adjusting to the Health Care setting. They provide casework services to help veterans deal with their feelings about their medical condition and long term care and to address issues of importance, which veterans identify. Social Workers provide education about Patients' Rights and are available to assist veterans in executing Advance Directives. Social Workers monitor veterans' decision making capacity with other team members and initiate applications for conservatorship, if indicated.

The Therapeutic Recreation Department provides recreational services on an individual or group basis to meet the social, physical, emotional and leisure needs of the patients. The purpose of the Department is to facilitate the development, maintenance and expression of a quality leisure lifestyle for individuals with physical, mental, emotional or social limitations and disabilities. The Department utilizes a therapeutic approach by providing interventions, leisure education and recreational opportunities as appropriate to the needs of the individual. Patients are referred by their physician/APRN, Chief of Physical Medicine or the psychiatrist for evaluation. All patients in the Health Care Center are screened by the recreational therapist for their need for formal therapeutic intervention and their ability to participate in self-initiated activities offered daily.

RESIDENTIAL LIVING PROGRAM

The Veterans' Improvement Program (VIP)

The Residential and Rehabilitative Services Program of the Department of Veterans' Affairs Home in Rocky Hill features the Veterans' Improvement Program (VIP). The residential program provides eligible veterans with a continuum of rehabilitation designed to ultimately, return them to independent living in the community. Components include room and board, substance abuse treatment if appropriate, temporary employment, training and education, job placement and transitional living. To qualify for admission to the Residential and Rehabilitative Service Program, veterans must be ambulatory, require no attendant care, be able to feed and dress themselves, make their own bed, and walk some distance to the dining room.

Room and Board

VIP participants reside in the Residential and Rehabilitative Services (RRS) Living Centers facilities in Rocky Hill in a dormitory setting. Meals, clothing, medical care, social services, etc., are provided.

Substance Abuse Recovery Program

This is a 6 month long-term program designed to assist and support veterans as they progress from addiction to rehabilitation to independence and, finally, reintegration into the community. A clinical staff develops a program for each veteran. Participation in some level of treatment is required for veterans with a history of substance abuse. The nature and extent will vary with individual backgrounds and needs.

Employment

VIP participants will have the opportunity, if physically qualified, to participate in a compensated work therapy program. These positions pay minimum wage for jobs in health care, maintenance, food services and clerical fields. In addition to receiving an income, veterans gain valuable work experience.

Education and Training

The Veterans' Improvement Program (VIP) assists veterans in reaching vocational/educational goals. In an effort to assist veterans with deciding upon a vocational/educational direction, testing is provided with the assistance of the Connecticut Department of Labor.

Veterans are expected to participate in the training and education that is available to them via the joint efforts of the Department of Veterans' Affairs and a local community college. Courses and workshops are selected with the focus of supporting personal enhancement, increasing employment opportunities, and preparing veterans for re-entry into the community. Driver's Education courses are taught on the grounds at the Rocky Hill campus.

Job Placement

When a veteran is deemed ready for outside employment, assistance and counseling in resume preparation, interviewing and other job search skills are provided. Veteran job fairs and veteran job banks are conducted and a Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling Coordinator is available to assist with job placement.

Transitional Living

When a veteran has obtained outside employment, he or she is eligible to participate in the Transitional Living phase of the VIP. This is located in a separate building with private rooms and provides the veterans with the opportunity to become accustomed to independent living on a gradual basis.

Connecticut Veterans' Initiative

The "Connecticut Veterans' Initiative (CTVETS) is an innovative vocational program designed to provide creative educational and training opportunities to prepare veterans for future employment. Through a collaborative effort between the staff of the Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs and veterans, veterans will acquire the necessary skills to assist them in reintegrating into meaningful employment within the community.

The first training opportunity under this new program is the Staff Meal Service Program. CTVETS offers staff the opportunity to purchase lunch in the Main Dining Room of the facility. The proceeds from these meal purchases will be used to support the ongoing operation of this program, as well as, toward the creation of future training opportunities.

OFFICE OF ADVOCACY AND ASSISTANCE

The Office of Advocacy and Assistance is responsible for providing assistance to any veteran who served in the U.S. Armed Forces, as well as their eligible spouse and their eligible dependents.

Assistance will be provided in obtaining veterans' benefits available under federal, state and local laws. The State has authorized Veterans' Service Officers to aid in this process. These officers will assist in the following areas:

- Collecting and preparing data relating to benefits and services for veterans of all wars.
- Canvassing nursing homes to determine if veterans and/or spouses in residence are due benefits.
- Assisting in the establishment, preparation and presentation of claims pursuant to rights, benefits or privileges accruing to veterans.
- Cooperating with service organizations in disseminating information.
- Furnishing counsel to veterans concerning educational training, health, medical and rehabilitation.
- Representing veterans before the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) concerning claims and benefits.

When a veteran thinks he/she is eligible for benefits they should seek assistance from:

- The nearest Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs (CT DVA) Office of Advocacy and Assistance located in each Congressional District (see pages 8-9). In addition to the five district offices, our agency staffs several satellite offices in other cities and towns on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. Check your local newspaper for information about the location, date and time the nearest satellite office will be open in your area.

AGENCY ADDRESS & TELEPHONE NUMBERS

**State of Connecticut
Department of Veterans' Affairs
287 West Street
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
1-800-447-0961**

Admitting Department
860-529-2571

Billing Department
860-721-5839

Residential & Rehabilitative Services
860-721-5833

Hospice Program/Respite Care
860-721-5955

CT Veterans' Cemetery
Bow Lane
Middletown, CT

Check with your Funeral Director or call 860-721-5838

**Office of Advocacy and Assistance
Veterans' Services Supervisor
P.O. Box 310909, Room 2E-3128
Newington, CT 06131-0909
860-594-6604 Telephone
860-667-1081 Facsimile**

Service Desk
555 Willard Avenue
Newington, CT 06131-0909
860-594-6605 Telephone
860-667-1081 Facsimile

Congressional District Offices
First District
287 West Street, Bldg. #7
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
860-721-5893/5894 Telephone
860-721-5843 Facsimile

Second District

102 Main Street
Norwich, CT 06360
860-887-9162 Telephone
860-885-0644 Facsimile

Third District

487-B Campbell Avenue
West Haven, CT 06516
203-931-0460 Telephone
203-931-0504 Facsimile

Fourth District

75 Middle Street
Bridgeport, CT 06604
203-336-2570 Telephone
203-336-2569 Facsimile

Fifth District

Rowland State Government Center
55 West Main Street, Suite 140
Waterbury, CT 06702
203-805-6340 Telephone
203-805-6341 Facsimile



Connecticut Recognized Periods of War

Spanish-American War

World War I

World War II

Korean Campaign

Vietnam Conflict

FEB 28, 1961 to JUL 1, 1975

Veterans who served in combat or combat support role during the following periods

Lebanon

JUL 1, 1958 to NOV 1, 1958

or

SEPT 29, 1982 to MAR 30, 1984

Grenada

OCT 25, 1983 to DEC 15, 1983

Operation Ernest Will

Involving the escort of Kuwaiti oil tankers flying the United States flag in the Persian Gulf

FEB 1, 1987 to JUL 23, 1987

Panama

DEC 20, 1989 to JAN 31, 1990

Persian Gulf War

AUG 2, 1990 until a date prescribed by the President or law.

A period beginning on the date of any future Congressional declaration of war and ending on the date prescribed by Presidential proclamation or concurrent resolution of Congress.



Note: Benefits and eligibility requirements may change. If you have questions, please contact the appropriate agency.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CGS	Connecticut General Statutes
CT DVA	Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs
VA	United States Department of Veterans Affairs
OA&A	Office of Advocacy and Assistance
PA	Public Act
Sec./Secs.	Section or Sections
VSO	Veterans' Service Organization

Your comments are welcome! Please mail them to:

The Office of the Commissioner
Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs
287 West Street
Rocky Hill, CT 06067-3902

Check out our website:

www.ct.gov/ctva