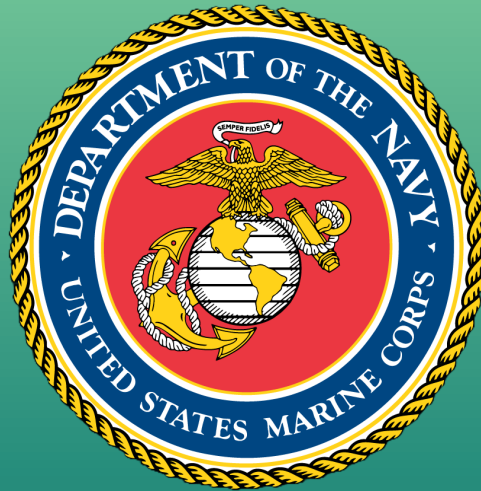


LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERAN CONNECTION

"Serving those who served and sacrificed for America"



Presented By:

Lexington County Veterans Affairs

605 West Main Street, Suite B

Lexington, SC 29072

(803) 785-8400



FROM THE DIRECTOR

We have been feverishly working as a team to assist as many Veterans as we can, and this has led to some great VA decisions. Since the inception of the PACT ACT in August 2022, we have seen landmark decisions that change the lives of the people we serve. When a Veteran gets a benefit for the first time, it is met with emotion and it always warms our heart.

Yours truly was in Washington, DC the latter part of March as part of a SC Legislative Team of four that visited all nine Congressional offices to discuss National Veterans bills that affect Veterans here. It was tiring work because it involved a lot of walking through the halls of Congress. Each lawmaker's office listened to us, took notes and got involved. Some of the bills will not make it through this session so we focused on the major Veteran bills. It was a great experience!

This issue is focused on Veterans' benefits to properly educate not only the Veteran, but the family also. The information provided is also available to the general public and we love to provide accurate and pertinent information to file successful claims.

Lastly, I always look forward to the Gilbert Peach Festival on July 4th. They gave us a scare earlier this year when it was announced the festival was canceled because there were not enough volunteers. This created a fever of interest and many new volunteers stepped forward and the festival is back on. My year does not feel right if I don't attend this Lexington County jewel of a parade and festival.

Enjoying the journey,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ed". The letters are cursive and slightly slanted to the right.

YOUR SERVICE - YOUR BENEFITS
CALL TO SCHEDULE
(803) 785-8400



don't forget

*Go to Welcome Center at
Dorn VA Hospital*

**Enroll in VA
Healthcare
TODAY!!**

(803) 776-4000

Email Us

Ed Lundeen, Director

elundeen@lexingtoncounty.sc.gov

Jennifer Parler,

Veterans Affairs Supervisor

jparler@lexingtoncounty.sc.gov

Brittany Gunter,

Senior Benefits Counselor

brgunter@lexingtoncounty.sc.gov

Jolene Bailey,

Benefits Counselor

jbailey@lexingtoncounty.sc.gov

Michelle Schrock,

Benefits Counselor

mschrock@lexingtoncounty.sc.gov

Annastasia Blake,

Administrative Assistant

ablake@lexingtoncounty.sc.gov



NOTE

Our office will be closed

Monday, May 11th

Monday, May 25th

Monthly Highlights

April 5 – Gold Star Spouses Day

Honors surviving spouses of fallen service members.

April 13 – Army Reserve Birthday (1908)

Marks the establishment of the U.S. Army Reserve.

May (Last Monday) – Memorial Day

Honors those who died while serving in the U.S. military.

May (3rd Saturday) – Armed Forces Day

Recognizes all branches of the U.S. military.

June 6 – D-Day (1944)

Allied forces landed in Normandy during World War II.

June 12 – Women Veterans Day

Honors women who have served in the U.S. military.

June 14 – Army Birthday (1775)

Marks the founding of the United States Army.

June 14 – Flag Day

Commemorates the adoption of the U.S. flag.



**24/7, CONFIDENTIAL CRISIS SUPPORT
FOR VETERANS AND THEIR LOVED ONES**

You don't have to be enrolled in VA benefits
or health care to connect!

Dial 988 then Press 1

**Chat online at
VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat**

Text 838255



The community has your six!

Free, confidential counseling for combat
Veterans, Service Members, & Families.

(803) 765-9944

1710 Richland Street, Suite A
Columbia, SC 29201

REVIEW YOUR BENEFITS: DEPENDENT COMPENSATION

30%
OR HIGHER
VA DISABILITY RATING

If you have a 30% or higher disability rating from VA, you may be eligible for more money to support your family by adding your dependents to your benefits. The fastest way to add a dependent is online through www.VA.gov

ELIGIBLE DEPENDENTS



SPOUSE

includes spouses in same-sex marriages and common-law marriages



CHILDREN

(biological, adopted, step-children) who are: unmarried and under the age of 18 OR between 18-23 and attending school full-time OR severely disabled



PARENTS

whose income and net worth are below the limit set by the law

NOTE:

Parents and spouses in common law marriages, cannot be added to your benefits online through eBenefits. To add a parent as a dependent, use VA Form 21-509, Statement of Dependency of Parents and to add a spouse from a common law marriage, submit VA Form 21-686c, Declaration of Status of Dependents.

If you didn't include your dependents in your original disability claim, file your online dependency claim as soon as you get your 30% or higher disability rating from VA.



Filing online is the fastest way to get your dependency claim.



You can get a decision in as little as 48 hours.



Log in to VA.gov with ID.me, click on your name at the top, and select Dependents from the drop down menu



Click, "Add or Remove Dependent" under the Apply section.



Fill out all the information required in the step-by-step application.
⚠ Don't leave anything blank.



Make sure all your information is accurate before you click "Submit."



VA will contact you if they have questions or need more information about your claim.

Contact Our Office for Assistance



Our trained Benefits Counselors can answer any questions you have & file your claim for you.

(803) 785-8400

Appointments are encouraged to better serve you.

Bring supporting documents: marriage certificate, birth certificates, school verification (age 18+), and death certificates (if applicable).

DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) is a tax-free monthly benefit paid to eligible surviving spouses, children, or parents of a service member or Veteran.

To qualify, the Veteran's death must have been one of the following:

- Occurred while on active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training, or
- Caused by a service-connected illness or injury, or
- Not service-connected, but the Veteran was rated totally disabled by VA for a required period of time before death

The survivor may qualify if the Veteran was:

- Rated totally disabled for at least 10 continuous years immediately before death, or
- Rated totally disabled from the date of discharge and for at least five continuous years immediately before death, or
- A former POW who died after September 30, 1999, and was rated totally disabled for at least one continuous year before death



Note: You may still qualify for compensation after remarriage if you remarried on or after December 16, 2003, at age 57 or older, or on or after January 5, 2021, at age 55 or older.

DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION

CONTINUED

Surviving Children

If you are a surviving child, you may be eligible for DIC if the Veteran parent died in the line of duty or as a result of a service-connected illness or injury.

You must also be unmarried and either under age 18, between ages 18 and 23 and attending school, or over age 18 and permanently incapable of self-support (requiring assistance with daily activities).

Exception: A surviving spouse entitled to DIC may receive additional benefits for a child over age 18 who is also receiving DIC.

Surviving Parents

Parents' DIC is an income-based monthly benefit for surviving parent(s) of a service member or Veteran whose death was service-related. To qualify, both must be true: you are the biological, adoptive, or foster parent of the Veteran or service member. Benefits are based on income. If your countable income exceeds the limit set by law, no benefits are payable. If you live with a spouse, their income must also be included. This includes the other parent of the Veteran or a spouse from remarriage.

You may be eligible if the service member or Veteran died from an injury or illness while on active duty, in the line of duty during inactive duty training, or from a service-connected illness or injury.

We recommend contacting us if:

- The Veteran was service-connected for any condition
- The cause of death may be related to service
- You have never applied for survivor benefits

Our counselors can assist by reviewing records and preparing a complete application.



VA Disability Claims, Increases, and Special Monthly Compensation (SMC)

VA disability compensation is a tax-free monthly benefit for Veterans with conditions related to their military service. Our office assists Veterans with filing new claims, requesting increases, and reviewing eligibility for additional benefits.

New Benefit Claims

A disability claim may be filed when a condition began during service or was caused or aggravated by military service. This can include physical conditions, mental health conditions, or illnesses that developed over time. To be eligible for VA benefits, a Veteran must generally have served on active duty and received a discharge other than dishonorable. The VA looks for three key elements when reviewing a claim: a current diagnosis, evidence of an in-service event or exposure, and a connection between the two. Medical records, service records, and supporting statements are often used to establish this link.



Our office prepares and submits claims on behalf of Veterans to ensure that all required information is included and properly documented.

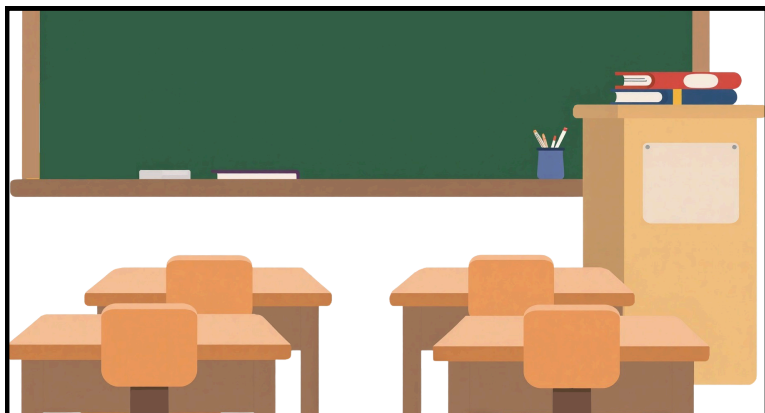
HAS IT GOTTEN WORSE?

If you are already service-connected, you may request an increased rating if your condition has worsened or if you have developed additional conditions related to your original disability. Examples may include increased pain, reduced mobility, worsening mental health symptoms, or secondary conditions such as nerve damage or sleep issues. Updated medical evidence is important when filing for an increase. In many cases, the VA will schedule an examination to evaluate the current severity of your condition. If your condition has changed since your last rating decision, it may be appropriate to have your file reviewed.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Special Monthly Compensation is an additional level of compensation paid to Veterans with certain severe disabilities. It is paid in addition to regular disability compensation. SMC may apply when a Veteran has loss of use of a limb, significant vision impairment, or requires assistance with daily activities such as bathing, dressing, or medication management. Aid and Attendance and Housebound benefits are two common forms of SMC. This benefit is often overlooked because eligibility is based on the overall impact of service-connected conditions, not just a single diagnosis.

UNLOCK EDUCATION BENEFITS WITH CHAPTER 35



The Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program, commonly referred to as Chapter 35, provides education and training benefits to eligible spouses and children of Veterans. This program offers a monthly payment to help cover the cost of approved education and training programs.

Dependents may qualify if:

- The Veteran is rated 100% Permanent and Total due to service-connected conditions
- The Veteran passed away as a result of a service-connected disability
- The service member died while on active duty
- Eligible individuals include spouses and children.

What Can the Benefit Be Used For?

- College or university programs
- Technical or vocational training
- Apprenticeships or on-the-job training
- Certification and licensing programs

Benefits are paid directly to the student.

To apply:

Go to VA.gov and complete VA Form 22-5490 or submit a paper application by mail.

Once approved, the student's school will certify enrollment with the VA.

Questions About Your Application

For questions about eligibility, application status, or payments, contact the VA Education Call Center: 888-442-4551

When to Contact Our Office

If you need general guidance on whether a dependent qualifies, our office can help review that portion. However, all applications and processing for Chapter 35 benefits are handled directly through the VA.





America 250: The Semiquincentennial

July 4, 1776 – July 4, 2026

In 2026, the United States will celebrate its Semiquincentennial, marking 250 years since the adoption of the Declaration of Independence.

While July 4, 1776, is recognized as the birth of the nation, independence was not fully secured until the Treaty of Paris in 1783, when Great Britain formally recognized the United States as a free and independent country.

At the time, America consisted of 13 colonies, which would go on to become the first 13 states. The Declaration of Independence was approved by the Second Continental Congress and signed by 56 delegates.

Interestingly, not all delegates signed the document on July 4. The signing process continued over several months, with the final signatures completed in January 1777.



DID YOU KNOW?

Have you ever heard someone say, “Put your John Hancock on it”? That phrase comes from John Hancock, a prominent leader of the American Revolution and the first signer of the Declaration of Independence.

Hancock signed his name boldly and much larger than the others. According to tradition, he wanted King George III to be able to read it clearly without spectacles.

Today, his name has become synonymous with a signature itself.

The courage shown by those who signed the Declaration, risking their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor, laid the foundation for the freedoms defended by generations of service members.

As we approach America’s 250th anniversary, it serves as a powerful reminder of the enduring commitment to liberty that continues through those who serve today.



If your clothing has been damaged by your prosthetic or orthopedic device (such as a wheelchair) or by the medicine you're taking for a skin condition, you may be able to get money each year to help you buy new clothes.

Am I eligible?

You may be eligible for a clothing allowance if you meet the requirements listed here.

One of these must be true:

- Your prosthetic or orthopedic device damages your clothes, or
- Your skin medicine causes damage to your outer clothing (like your pants or shirt) that can't be repaired

And this must be true:

You need this device or skin medicine because of an injury or illness related to your military service (called a service-connected condition).

Note: You must have a service-connected disability to qualify.

What type of clothing allowance is available?

To get an annual payment, or if you want to apply for an additional clothing allowance, you'll need to qualify by August 1 of that year. Applications are collected throughout the year and held until the August 1 closing date. If you qualify, you'll receive your payment between September 1 and October 31.

To Apply:

Go to [VA.gov](https://www.va.gov) and complete VA Form 10-8678 . You can also apply through your local VA medical center. Bring your application, or mail it, to the prosthetic representative at your local VA medical center.

DID YOU KNOW?



TOP 5 THINGS TO DO ON VA.GOV

Upload documents or evidence for your claim - Submit supporting records and information directly through VA.gov.

Check the status of a claim or appeal - Track progress and see updates without needing to call.

Update direct deposit and contact information - Keep your payment and mailing information current.

Download VA letters and documents - Access benefit verification letters and other records instantly.

Manage and review your VA benefits - View your disability rating, payment history, and benefit details in one place.

HAVE YOU MOVED?



You should notify the VA if you move so you do not miss important letters, exams, or deadlines. Returned mail could potentially cause an interruption in your benefits.

WHEN ZERO ISN'T NOTHING

A 0% VA disability rating means the VA recognizes your condition as service-connected, but it is not currently severe enough to qualify for monthly compensation. It is not a denial and still establishes eligibility for certain benefits, and allows for easier filing for increase if the condition worsens.

ID.me

Accessing VA.gov often requires identity verification through ID.me. Creating and verifying an ID.me account allows you to securely manage benefits, submit claims, and update your information online.



100% P&T

Need a Tax Exemption Letter?

Did you know you can download your **Benefit Summary and Service Verification Letter** for your tax exemption applications through your VA.gov account?

South Carolina State **VETERAN NURSING HOMES**

Veteran Nursing Homes provide skilled, long-term care in a setting dedicated to those who served. These facilities offer 24-hour nursing care with a higher level of support while maintaining dignity, comfort, and connection with fellow service members.

Admission Requirements, Veteran must:

- Have served on active duty and
- Been discharged under conditions other than dishonorable and
- Meet the VA criteria for long-term nursing care

To apply, schedule a tour, or get help with an application, contact nursing homes below.

ANDERSON – RICHARD M. CAMPBELL VETERANS HOME

4605 Belton Hwy, Anderson, SC
(864) 965-0373
Contact: Joy Hartmann

COLUMBIA – E. ROY STONE JR. VETERANS HOME

2200 Harden St, Columbia, SC
(803) 723-7841
Contact: Kimberly Young, LPN

WALTERBORO VETERANS VICTORY HOUSE

2461 Sidneys Rd, Walterboro, SC
(843) 538-3000
Contact: Stephanie Ballard

GAFFNEY - PALMETTO PATRIOTS HOME

120 Hampshire Dr, Gaffney, SC
(864) 491-0393
Contact: Jenna Camp, RN

SUMTER PATRIOTS VILLAGE

915 N. Wise Dr, Sumter, SC
(839) 900-1230
Contact: Danielle Gregory

FLORENCE VETERAN VILLAGE

1200 E. Natl Cemetery Rd, Florence, SC
(843) 319-8091
Contact: August Dawkins, RN



MEMORIAL DAY

Please join us for a
Memorial Day Service

May 25, 2026

10:00 a.m.

Caughman Harman Funeral Home

503 N. Lake Dr.

Lexington, SC 29072

803-359-6118

Refreshments will be served
following the service





The Air Medal

The Air Medal was established on May 11, 1942, by President Franklin D. Roosevelt through Executive Order 9158, and later amended on September 11, 1942.

Created during a high-casualty period of World War II air operations, the Air Medal recognizes heroism or meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight. It may be awarded to U.S. military members, civilians, and qualifying foreign personnel.

Who It Honors

The Air Medal is awarded for performance that goes beyond normal expectations, but does not meet the higher standard required for the Distinguished Flying Cross.

It is most often awarded to:

- Aircrew members and others whose duties require regular flight participation
- Personnel who make significant contributions during flight
- Individuals performing a single act of merit or heroism

It is not intended for routine peacetime flight operations.

Authorized Devices

- Oak Leaf Clusters (Air Force): Additional awards
- Combat “C” Device (since January 7, 2016): For achievement under combat conditions involving risk or exposure to hostile action
- Valor “V” Device (since January 7, 2016): For acts of heroism in direct combat

Service Branch Notes

- Army: Uses numerals for additional awards and may authorize the Valor device
- Air Force: Uses oak leaf clusters and authorizes Combat “C” and Valor “V” devices
- Navy and Marine Corps: Distinguish between individual and strike or flight awards, using numerals and Valor where applicable
- Coast Guard: Uses gold and silver stars for additional awards, with no extra devices authorized

We Want
YOU



To Volunteer!

Veterans are invited to lead the Pledge of Allegiance at Lexington County Council meetings, held on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month.

Location:

County Council Chambers
2nd Floor, County Administration Building
212 South Lake Drive

Time

Meeting begins at 4:30 PM

Please arrive by 4:15 PM and check in inside the chamber



Interested in Participating?

(803)785-8400

or email

ablake@lexingtoncounty.sc.gov

LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS GROUP



**The group meets
Tuesday
10 am-12 pm**

**American Legion Post 7
211 American Legion Dr
(off Harmon St.)
Lexington, SC 29072**

**All Lexington County
Veterans are cordially
invited to attend the weekly
meeting.**

**Please contact us for more
information about joining!**

**E.C. Murray 803-606-9571
Rich (Richard) Little 803-422-1113**



IMPORTANT CONTACTS

LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS AFFAIRS (803) 785-8400

VA General Support & Benefits

MyVA411 (800) 698-2411
 VA Benefits Hotline (800) 827-1000
 VA Education Hotline (888) 442-4551
 VA Home Loans (877) 827-3702

Women Veterans & Specialty Support

Special Issue Hotline (800) 749-8387
 (Blue Water Navy, Gulf War, Agent Orange)
 Caregiver Support Line (855) 260-3274
 Quit VET (stop smoking) (855) 784-8838
 Women Veterans Call Cntr (855) 829-6636

Military, Burial & Financial Services

Ft. Jackson Natl Cemetery (866) 577-5248
 VA Headstones & Marker (800) 697-6947
 SGLI and VGLI (800) 419-1473
 All Other VA Life Ins (800) 669-8477
 DFAS (800) 321-1080

Housing & Crisis Support

Mission Lexington (803) 785-6930
 Transitions (Housing, Meals) (803) 708-4861
 VA Natl Homeless Center (877) 424-3838
 Veterans Crisis Line Dial 988, then press 1
 VA Suicide Hotline (Direct) (800) 273-8255

Medical & Health Services

Healthcare Eligibility (877) 222-8387
 Dorn VA Medical Center (803) 776-4000
 VA Pharmacy Refills (800)-293-8262
 Community Care (800) 733-8387
 CHAMPVA (800) 733-8387
 CHAMPVA Meds by Mail (800) 385-0235
 TRICARE (SE Region) (800) 444-5445



National Veterans Legal Services Program provides free legal representation to Veterans and their families in advanced VA cases. If you've been denied, are facing a complicated appeal, or need help correcting your military discharge, NVLSP's experienced attorneys can step in at no cost to you.

1-800-729-8387
www.nvlsp.org

Free legal help when your case needs the next level of support.

FROM HELLO TO HELP 2-1-1 IS HERE

SC 211 provides information and referral services for all of South Carolina to those needing assistance with rent, electric bills, food pantries, shelters, legal aid, etc.