in writing and inform the claimant of VA reconsideration and appeal rights.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 1725)

§ 17.1007 Independent right of recovery.

(a) VA has the right to recover its payment under this section when, and to the extent that, a third party makes payment for all or part of the same emergency treatment for which VA reimbursed or made payment under this section.

(1) Under 38 U.S.C. 1725(d)(4), the veteran (or the veteran’s personal representative, successor, dependents, or survivors) or claimant shall ensure that the Secretary is promptly notified of any payment received from any third party for emergency treatment furnished to the veteran. The veteran (or the veteran’s personal representative, successor, dependents, or survivors) or claimant shall immediately forward all documents relating to such payment, cooperate with the Secretary in the investigation of such payment and assist the Secretary in enforcing the United States’ right to recover any payment made and accepted under this section.

(2) If the Chief Financial Officer or equivalent official at the VA medical facility of jurisdiction concludes that payment from a third party was made for all or part of the same emergency treatment for which VA made payment under this section, such VA official shall, except as provided in paragraph (c) of this section, initiate action to collect or recover the amount of the duplicate payment in the same manner as for any other debt owed the United States.

(b)(1) Any amount paid by the United States to the veteran (or the veteran’s personal representative, successor, dependents, or survivors) or to any other person or organization paying for such treatment shall constitute a lien against any subsequent amount the provider receives from a third party for the same emergency treatment for which the United States made payment.

(c) If it is determined that a duplicate payment was made, the Chief Financial Officer or equivalent official at the VA medical facility of jurisdiction may waive recovery of a VA payment made under this section to a veteran upon determining that the veteran has substantially complied with the provisions of paragraph (a)(1) of this section and that actions to recover the payment would not be cost-effective or would conflict with other litigative interests of the United States.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 1725)

§ 17.1008 Balance billing prohibited.

Payment by VA under 38 U.S.C. 1725 on behalf of a veteran to a provider of emergency treatment and any non-emergency treatment that is authorized under § 17.1005(c) of this part shall, unless rejected and refunded by the provider within 30 days of receipt, extinguish all liability on the part of the veteran for that emergency treatment and any non-emergency treatment that is authorized under § 17.1005(c) of this part. Neither the absence of a contract or agreement between VA and the provider nor any provision of a contract, agreement, or assignment to the contrary shall operate to modify, limit, or negate this requirement.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 1725)

§ 17.2000 Vet Center services.

(a) Eligibility for readjustment counseling. Upon request, VA will provide readjustment counseling to the following individuals:

(1) A veteran who served on active duty in a theater of combat operations during a period of war:
(2) A veteran who served on active duty in an area in which hostilities occurred, or in combat against a hostile force during a period of hostilities.

(3) A veteran who served on active duty during the Vietnam era who sought or was provided counseling under 38 U.S.C. 1712A before January 1, 2004.

(4) Any member of the Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard or reserve, who served on active duty in the Armed Forces in Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation New Dawn.

(5) A family member of a veteran or servicemember who is eligible for readjustment counseling under paragraphs (a)(1) through (a)(4) of this section. For purposes of this section, family member includes, but is not limited to, the spouse, parent, child, step-family member, extended family member, and any individual who lives with the veteran or servicemember but is not a member of the family of the veteran or servicemember.

(b) Proof of eligibility. With the veteran's or servicemember's consent, VA will assist in obtaining proof of eligibility. For the purposes of this section, proof of service in a theater of combat operations or in an area during a period of hostilities in that area will be established by:

(1) A DD Form 214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty) containing notations of service in a designated theater of combat operations; or

(2) Receipt of one of the following medals: The Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Service Specific Expeditionary Medal (e.g., Navy Expeditionary Medal), Combat Era Specific Expeditionary Medal (e.g., the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal), Campaign Specific Medal (e.g., Vietnam Service Medal or Iraq Campaign Medal), or other combat theater awards established by public law or executive order; or

(3) Proof of receipt of Hostile Fire or Imminent Danger Pay (commonly referred to as “combat pay”) or combat tax exemption after November 11, 1996.

(c) Referral and advice. Upon request, VA will provide an individual who does not meet the eligibility requirements of paragraph (a) of this section, solely because the individual was discharged under dishonorable conditions from active military, naval, or air service, the following:

(1) Referral services to assist such individual, to the maximum extent practicable, in obtaining mental health care and services from sources outside VA; and

(2) If pertinent, advice to such individual concerning such individual's rights to apply to:

(i) The appropriate military, naval or air service for review of such individual's discharge or release from such service; and

(ii) VA for a VA benefits eligibility determination under 38 CFR 3.12.

(d) Readjustment counseling defined. For the purposes of this section, readjustment counseling includes, but is not limited to: psychosocial assessment, individual counseling, group counseling, marital and family counseling for military-related readjustment issues, substance abuse assessments, medical referrals, referral for additional VA benefits, employment assessment and referral, military sexual trauma counseling and referral, bereavement counseling, and outreach. A "psychosocial assessment" under this paragraph means the holistic assessing of an individual's psychological, social, and functional capacities as it relates to their readjustment from combat theaters. Readjustment counseling is provided to individuals listed in paragraphs (a)(1) through (a)(4) of this section, and to family members under paragraph (a)(5) of this section, when it would aid in the readjustment of a veteran or servicemember.

(e) Confidentiality. Benefits under this section are furnished solely by VA Vet Centers, which maintain confidential records independent from any other VA or Department of Defense medical records and which will not disclose such records without either the veteran or servicemember's voluntary, signed authorization, or a specific exception permitting their release. For more information, see 5 U.S.C. 552a, 38 U.S.C. 5701 and 7332, 45 CFR parts 160 and 164, and VA's System of Records.
64VA15, "Readjustment Counseling Service Vet Center Program."


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