

## IMPROVE YOUR CHANCES OF GETTING VA BENEFITS

The VA process is often complicated and very confusing. This course provides an overview of the system. It not only explains the rules, but also provides practical advice for advocates and veterans alike. Although no course can cover every situation related to federal veterans' benefits, this course provides a road map of the VA system and can help you understand what information is needed and how to get it.

### CHAPTER 1

#### *Introduction and Overview of the VA Claims System*

This chapter provides an overview of the VA system. Among the highlights are a look at:

- The VA disability benefits and claims system
- The veterans' advocacy network
- The role of post service officers and other advocates

### CHAPTER 2

#### *Eligibility Requirements*

This chapter explains what is needed to prove eligibility for veterans' benefits.

- Who is a "veteran"
- How to deal with different types of discharges
- Benefits based on different periods of service
- Family members eligibility

### CHAPTER 3

#### *Compensation*

Service-connected compensation can be a tricky subject. Among the issues covered are:

- Uncovering claims for compensation that might otherwise be missed
- The value of establishing service connection for a disability
- Potential claims for post-traumatic stress, undiagnosed illnesses, heart conditions, secondary conditions, and presumptively service-connected conditions.

### CHAPTER 4

#### *How the VA Rates Disabilities*

Advocates will learn:

- How the VA rates the severity of disabilities
- How to receive the highest evaluation possible
- What is individual unemployability

### CHAPTER 5

#### *Service-Connected Death Benefits*

This chapter explains:

- Who is entitled to dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC)
- The value of establishing that the veteran's death was service connected
- Who is considered a survivor

### CHAPTER 6

#### *Non-Service-Connected Pension and Death Benefits*

This chapter covers:

- Eligibility requirements for non-service-connected VA pension
- Need-based qualification requirements
- Proving permanent and total disability
- Qualifying for death pension benefits

### CHAPTER 7

#### *Explanation of VA Claims Process*

This chapter outlines the VA claims process. It includes tips on:

- Applying for benefits
- Getting medical reports and evidence
- Organizing and presenting your argument
- The importance of saving VA letters and notices
- Appealing to the Board of Veterans' Appeals

### CHAPTER 8

#### *General Overview of the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims*

The U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims is a federal court, entirely independent of the VA, that deals with claimants not satisfied with Board of Veterans' Appeals decisions. This chapter provides an overview of:

- The 120-day deadline for filing a notice of appeal
- The benefits of attorney representation at court
- Volunteer attorneys available through the Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program

### CHAPTER 9

#### *VA Debt Collection Process*

This chapter explains the basic principles of the debt collection process and options available to Veterans and their families.

### CHAPTER 10

#### *How to Upgrade Discharges and Correct Military Records*

Provides detailed information on how to upgrade discharge and military records.

### CHAPTER 11

#### *VA Health Care*

Outlines the VA Health Care System and explains:

- Enrollment
- Nursing Home Care
- Outpatient treatment
- New reimbursement and copayment rules

## A COMPLETE SET OF INTAKE FORMS TO HELP VSOs AND VETERANS

The NVLSP *Basic Training Correspondence Course* includes more than a dozen intake forms that will help VSOs determine what benefits a veteran is entitled to. It includes a general intake form and more specific forms for eligibility, compensation, service-connected death benefits, §1151 and Federal Tort Claims Act actions, and more. These helpful intake forms provide an important tool for pinpointing and successfully preparing a veteran's claim.

## WHAT IS NVLSP?

The National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP) is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit law organization. For more than 25 years, we have been helping veterans who because of the effects of military service have been unable to share in opportunities available to most Americans. We serve these veterans through advocacy, education, litigation, training advocates who represent veterans, and publications.

"I took NVLSP's Basic Training Course about one year ago. I was a newly hired assistant service officer. Even though I had 29 years of military experience I had little knowledge of VA benefits. I found the course very helpful. It gave me a good basic understanding of VA programs, benefits and the duties of a service officer."

—Tom Ludka, Department of Wisconsin American Legion, Assistant Service Officer

## HOW TO AVOID THE PITFALLS OF THE VA CLAIMS SYSTEM

### COURSE OBJECTIVE

A correspondence course that you can take at home, the National Veterans Legal Services Program's (NVLSP's) **Basic Training Correspondence Course in Veterans Benefits** is a primer that will help you better understand the basics of veterans law and how to deal with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

This easy-to-understand course—prepared by Ron Abrams, NVLSP's director of training—is designed for both *veterans' advocates* and *veterans* themselves. It provides *veterans' advocates*, including veterans' service officers (VSOs), with the vital information required to work more efficiently and effectively with veterans in need. It offers *veterans* a basic understanding of the system that will help them work more effectively with their advocates.

### FOR VETERANS' ADVOCATES:

- Maximize your time working with veterans
- Better understand service-connected disability compensation claims and other important benefits
- With the help of NVLSP's intake forms, decide what evidence is critical to a claim
- Organize and present evidence to the VA
- Better understand the appeals process

### FOR VETERANS:

- Find free representation through the veterans' advocate network
- Better assist the advocate who is representing you
- Understand the process of submitting a claim
- Be better prepared in finding and getting evidence for claims submission
- Find out how to get information and medical opinions from physicians

## EARN NVLSP TRAINING CERTIFICATION

After finishing the course and successfully completing the examination, you will be awarded NVLSP's **Basic Training Correspondence Course** certificate. The course examination, like the course itself, can be completed at home. Simply mail the completed exam to NVLSP for scoring.

### HOW TO ORDER

Order online at <http://www.nvlsp.org>. The complete NVLSP **Basic Training Correspondence Course**, including the course manual, sample intake forms, and test material costs \$149.95 plus \$10.00 S/H. The fee also includes test scoring and award certification via mail by NVLSP. Order online at <http://www.nvlsp.org> or complete the mail-in order form below.

## SEND TODAY AND BETTER UNDERSTAND THE VA

Name & Title: \_\_\_\_\_

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Please make check payable to NVLSP for \$149.95 plus \$10.00 S/H and mail with this form to: **NVLSP – Attn: TCCB**  
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**NVLSP**

NATIONAL VETERANS LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM

<http://www.nvlsp.org>

## The National Veterans Legal Services Program's **BASIC TRAINING CORRESPONDENCE COURSE IN VETERANS BENEFITS**

**WHO  
SHOULD  
TAKE  
THIS  
COURSE?**

