

Q: What are the eligibility requirements for benefits?

A: The State and Federal requirements differ in their determination of who is a veteran. Eligibility for most VA benefits is based upon discharge from active military service under other than dishonorable conditions. Active service means full-time service, other than active duty for training, as a member of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, or as a commissioned officer of the Public Health Service, Environmental Science Services Administration or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or its predecessor, the Coast and Geodetic Survey. Generally, men and women veterans with similar service may be entitled to the same VA benefits.

Dishonorable and bad conduct discharges issued by general courts-martial may bar VA benefits. Veterans in prison and parolees must contact a VA regional office to determine eligibility. VA benefits will not be provided to any veteran or dependent wanted for an outstanding felony warrant.

Certain VA benefits require service during wartime. Under the law, VA recognizes these war periods:

Mexican Border Period: May 9, 1916, through April 5, 1917, for veterans who served in Mexico, on its borders or in adjacent waters.

World War I: April 6, 1917, through Nov. 11, 1918; for veterans who served in Russia, April 6, 1917, through April 1, 1920; extended through July 1, 1921, for veterans who had at least one day of service between April 6, 1917, and Nov. 11, 1918.

World War II: Dec. 7, 1941, through Dec. 31, 1946.

Korean War: June 27, 1950, through Jan. 31, 1955.

Vietnam War: Aug. 5, 1964 (Feb. 28, 1961, for veterans who served “in country” before Aug. 5, 1964), through May 7, 1975.

Gulf War: Aug. 2, 1990, through a date to be set by law or Presidential Proclamation.

Massachusetts recognizes the following periods of service to determine eligibility for State Benefits:

DEFINITION OF MASSACHUSETTS VETERAN
M.G.L. c. 4, sec. 7, cl. 43rd as amended by the Acts of 2005, ch. 130

ERA of Service	DATES	Requirement for Veteran Status
WWI	6-Apr-1917 11-Nov-1918	90 days of active duty service, one (1) day during “wartime” and a last discharge or release under honorable conditions.
PEACETIME	12-Nov-1918 15-Sep-1940	180 days of regular active duty service and a last discharge or release under honorable conditions.

	WWII (Merchant Marine: 7-Dec-1941 through 31-Dec-1946)	16-Sep-1940 25-Jul-1947	90 days of active duty service, one (1) day during “wartime” and a last discharge or release under honorable conditions.
	PEACETIME	26-Jul-1947 24-Jun-1950	180 days of regular active duty service and a last discharge or release under honorable conditions.
	KOREA	25-Jun-1950 31-Jan-1955	90 days of active duty service, one (1) day during “wartime” and a last discharge or release under honorable conditions.
	Korean Defense Service Medal	28-Jul-1954 (to be determined later)	90 days of active duty service, last discharge under honorable conditions and the Korean Defense Service Medal
	VIETNAM I	1-Feb-1955 4-Aug-1964	180 days of regular active duty service and a last discharge or release under honorable conditions.
	VIETNAM II	5-Aug-1964 7-May-1975	90 days of active duty service, one (1) day during “wartime” and a last discharge or release under honorable conditions.
	PEACETIME	8-May-1975 1-Aug-1990	180 days of regular active duty service and a last discharge or release under honorable conditions.
	Lebanon Campaign *	25-Aug-1982 (to be determined later)	90 days of active duty service, one (1) day during “wartime” and a last discharge or release under honorable conditions.
	Grenada Campaign *	25-Oct-1983 15-Dec-1983	90 days of active duty service, one (1) day during “wartime” and a last discharge or release under honorable conditions.
	Panama Campaign *	20-Dec-1989 31-Jan-1990	90 days of active duty service, one (1) day during “wartime” and a last discharge or release under honorable conditions.

PERSIAN GULF	2-Aug-1990 (to be determined later)	90 days of active duty service, one (1) day during “wartime” and a last discharge or release under honorable conditions.
---------------------	--	---

*Naval and Marine DD214 must indicate Expeditionary Medal. All DD214’s must specify campaign: Lebanon, Granada, or Panama.

- For **GUARD MEMBERS** to qualify they must have 180 days and have been activated under Title 10 of the U.S. Code **-OR-** Members who were activated under Title 10 or Title 32 of the U.S. Code or Massachusetts General Laws, chapter 33, sections 38, 40, and 41 must have 90 days, at least one of which was during wartime, per the above chart.
- For **RESERVISTS** to qualify, they must have been called to regular active duty, at which point their eligibility can be determined by the above chart.

Training Duty Exception: Active duty service in the armed forces shall not include active duty for training in the Army or Air National Guard or active duty for training as a Reservist in the Armed Forces of the United States.

Minimum Service Exception (for Death or Disability)

It is not necessary that an applicant have completed the minimum service for wartime or peacetime campaign if he/she served some time in the campaign and was awarded the Purple Heart, or suffered a service-connected disability per the Discharge Certificate, or died in the service under honorable conditions.

Q: Can I file my own claim for VA benefits?

A: You may file your own claim, however most veterans find it easier and less stressful to have a National Service Officer from a veteran’s Organization such as the American Legion or the VFW prepare and file the claim on their behalf. The Massachusetts Department of Veteran’s Services will also act as your agent for your VA Claim.

Q: How much will it cost to have a veteran’s organization represent me through the claims process?

A: There is no charge to have a veteran’s organization represent you during the claims process.

Q: Where can I get a copy of my DD-214?

A: Copies of DD Form 214 are available from the National Archives Records Administration or if your service was during war time and you were a Massachusetts resident when you entered the military your local VSO can access a copy through the state.

Q: My service was peacetime only, how can I get a copy of my DD 214 from NARA?

A: You must submit a completed Standard Form 180 (SF 180) to NARA. If your service was before 1 January 1960 there is a possibility that your record was damaged or destroyed in a fire that occurred in the National Personnel Records Center in 1972.

Q: Can surviving spouses get veteran's benefits from the state?

A: Yes, a surviving spouse can get veteran's benefits from the state if he/she is 65 or over, or disabled and meets income and asset guidelines set down by the state.