



My Next Steps: Medical Discharge Support

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Resources at a Glance

- [Locate](#) a legal services office
- DoD's [Warrior Care](#)
- [Wounded, Ill, and/or Injured Compensation and Benefits Handbook](#)



Question

My service member is being medically discharged. Where can our family go for support as we prepare to transition from the military?



Answer

Medical discharge from the military can be an uncertain and emotional process, especially if your family is coping with challenges due to your service member's injury, illness or medical condition. If the Integrated Disability Evaluation System has determined that your service member's medical condition makes it impossible for him or her to continue military service, you may transition to civilian life sooner than you planned and under uncertain or difficult circumstances. Whether the outcome of your service member's medical evaluation process is separation, placement on the temporary disability retired list, referred to as the TDRL, or permanent retirement, as a military spouse, you can help your service member and your family attain the best outcomes as you transition to civilian life. MySTeP will point you to resources to help you - a military spouse - best support your family during transition from the military. This fact sheet introduces additional information you may need as your family leaves the military as a result of your service member's medical discharge. To ensure you receive the benefits, entitlements and assistance you deserve, take an active role in your family's transition. Use the information from MySTeP and this fact sheet plus the advocates and systems of support that are offered by the Department of Defense and other government agencies to wounded warriors and their families.

All service members and military families preparing to transition from the military are encouraged to attend the DoD's Transition Assistance Program. You can discuss transition training opportunities with your service member's physical evaluation board liaison officer, often referred to as a PEBLO, or contact the transition office on an installation

near you for more information. The Stepping Beyond Transition Assistance and Training category provides information about TAP that is relevant to military spouses, including links to take the training online and other helpful spouse-related transition resources.

Beyond the information and support available through TAP, your service member and your family can access additional programs and support for help with financial, medical and employment information and considerations specific to those transitioning out of the service through the medical board process.

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Financial Benefits and Entitlements

If the outcome of your service member's medical board is to separate with severance pay, to be transferred to the TDRL, or to be permanently retired, your family will receive



Answer (cont.)

compensation from the DoD. The professionals at your installation's finance office or with the Defense Finance Accounting Service can help calculate the amount of severance pay or retired pay your service member can expect to receive after transition from the military. Find the contact information for your nearest finance office and for DFAS in the Resources section. If your service member does not have enough years of service to retire or his or her medical issue is determined to be unrelated to military service, your service member may be discharged without additional compensation from the DoD.

In the case of medical discharge, it is helpful to understand disability compensation in addition to severance pay and retirement compensation. As part of the IDES, your service member should receive a disability rating based on the Department of Veterans Affairs Schedule for Rating Disabilities from the DoD and the VA before leaving the service. The DoD disability rating determines the benefits your service member is eligible to receive from the DoD and can include Pay and Allowance Continuation, other special, partial or casual pay and other benefits. The DoD Wounded, Ill, and/or Injured Compensation and Benefits Handbook is linked in the Resources section. This guide gives an overview of the benefits and entitlements the DoD provides to wounded, ill and/or injured service members. However, the guidelines for eligibility, application and types and amounts of DoD disability compensation are complex. To ensure your service member and your family receive the financial benefits and entitlements for which you are eligible, seek assistance from the nearest installation finance office, or contact the DFAS Wounded Warrior Pay Management Team.

The VA disability rating that your service member receives can be higher than his or her DoD disability rating. The reason is that the VA disability rating addresses all referred and claimed service-connected conditions, not just those that make your service member unable to continue to serve in the military. Your service member's VA disability rating will determine the amount of compensation your family will receive from the VA and will also entitle your service member, and in some circumstances your family, to other valuable VA benefits. Service members who are medically discharged and are not eligible for severance or retirement pay from the DoD may still be eligible for VA disability compensation if they are separating with at least an other than honorable discharge and their illness or injury is service-related. If a VA disability compensation claim for your service member has not been submitted during the medical evaluation process, you are encouraged to help him or her prepare and submit a claim to qualify for VA disability compensation and other

important benefits from the VA. Visit the VA websites listed in the Resources section, and view the Stepping Beyond video and fact sheet titled Understanding the VA Disability Claim Process for Transitioning Military Families for more information. If your service member needs help filing a VA claim or understanding his or her VA disability rating, contact an accredited veterans service officer, veterans service organization, or a VA claims representative using the link provided in the Steps to Take and Resources sections of this fact sheet.

Generally, if your service member is eligible for disability retired pay from the DoD, the monthly amount he or she receives will be reduced by the amount of monthly VA disability compensation he or she receives. Depending on your service member's VA rating, however, he or she may be eligible for Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay or Combat-Related Special Compensation. The DFAS website listed in the Resources section has additional information about these entitlements and how they are calculated and paid. The Stepping Beyond video and fact sheet titled Understanding VA Disability Ratings and Compensation provides insight for military spouses into military retirement pay and disability pay.

If your service member's medical discharge is from a traumatic injury, your service member may also be entitled to benefits from Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance Traumatic Injury Protection. If your service member is insured by SGLI, he or she is automatically covered by TSGLI. To find out more, visit the VA website found in the Resources section with information about TSGLI.

In addition to DoD disability pay and VA disability pay, your service member may qualify for disability benefits through the Social Security Administration. The Social Security Administration website in the Resources section provides additional information and options to apply.

Health Care and Coverage

Continued health care and coverage for your service member and your entire family are also critical considerations when transitioning from the military due to a medical discharge. Depending on whether your service member is separating or retiring, your family may have different options for health care and insurance coverage after leaving the military. The TRICARE and VA health care websites listed in the Resources section offer health care and coverage information for those leaving the military through a medical discharge. The Stepping Beyond videos and fact sheets in the Health Care, Dental and Vision category provide additional information and resources for military spouses about options for continued TRICARE coverage.



Answer (cont.)

You can learn about factors to consider if seeking health care and coverage other than TRICARE after separation or retirement. In addition, you can learn how VA health care may offer a wide range of health benefits to your service member and your family after transition, particularly if your service member has a permanent and total service-connected disability. For in-person help regarding continued TRICARE benefits, talk to a health benefits advisor at a nearby military installation. For help with VA health care, talk to a VA health benefits advisor at a VA medical center or clinic near you.

Employment and Education

Employment and education opportunities for you and your service member may be another important consideration following medical discharge. Your service member may be able to use the Education and Employment Initiative sponsored by the DoD, such as Operation Warfighter or the Education and Employment Initiative. Your service member may also qualify for veterans' preference in hiring for federal government jobs. You may use this benefit, as a military spouse, if your service member cannot. Service members who leave the service through a medical discharge are generally entitled to the VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment services. The Department of Labor also provides disabled veterans outreach program specialists who can help you and your service member find employment after transition. State Vocational Rehabilitation programs also work with veterans and military spouses who are pursuing employment. The employment and education-related websites listed in the Resources section provide details about these programs. The MySTeP Stepping Beyond category Employment Assistance provides information and resources to specifically help military spouses advance their education and careers.

Additional employment and education benefits for military spouses who provide care for disabled service members may include job protection under the Family and Medical Leave Act and Survivors and Dependents Educational Assistance. The DEA program is provided by the VA to family members whose service members are rated permanently and totally disabled as a result of a service-connected disability. If applicable to your family's situation, learn more about these benefits by visiting each program's website listed in the Resources section.

Caring for an Ill or Injured Service Member or Veteran

As the spouse of a disabled service member or veteran, the responsibility to care for your service member and family could shift primarily to you, and that can be overwhelming. TRICARE offers a respite care program for caregivers.

The VA also offers supports and services for family caregivers, including caregiver education and training, peer support and respite care. If your medically discharged service member incurred or aggravated an injury in the line of duty after September 11, 2001, you may meet the criteria for VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers. To find out more, visit the TRICARE and VA caregiver websites listed in the Resources section. You can also talk to an installation health benefits advisor or a designated caregiver support coordinator located at the nearest VA medical center.

Stress and Mental Health

The outcome of your service member's medical evaluation board and uncertainty about your future could be stressful and overwhelming for you, your service member and your family. Seek support from a professional. The Stepping Beyond category titled Emotional Health Support provides information and resources to help keep your family moving in a positive direction during transition and after as you adjust to the life-altering changes that result from a medical discharge and reintegration into civilian life. Military OneSource consultants can also provide non-medical counseling and referrals to help you through this stressful time.

As a military spouse, you have provided a tremendous amount of support to your service member and family during your time in the military. As your family makes the transition to civilian life following your service member's medical discharge, your continued support is invaluable. Take advantage of the many resources in place to help your service member and family during transition and after. Be sure to also explore the resources designed specifically for you.

**Please note, if your service member and you disagree with the findings of his or her medical evaluation process, there are opportunities within the system to appeal the decision of the medical and physical evaluation boards. As your service member's spouse, you may be in the best position to advocate for him or her. Start by communicating closely with the physical evaluation board liaison officer who is helping with your service member's case. As a military spouse, you also have access to government legal counsel for consultation and advice. You may also retain private counsel, at your own expense, or get assistance from a Veterans Affairs-accredited service organization, veterans service officer or attorney. Links to locate these advocates are found in the Resources section of this fact sheet.*



Steps to Consider

These “Steps to Consider” are not meant as a checklist. Use the suggestions to facilitate a discussion with your service member.

- Talk with your service member to fully understand the conditions under which he or she will leave the military. This discussion may include the outcome of the medical board process. Will your service member be medically discharged without pay, separated with severance pay, placed on the temporary disability retired list or permanently retired? Will your service member retire with an honorable discharge? These factors influence the amount of compensation and eligibility for other DoD and VA benefits for which your service member and family may qualify.
- As a military spouse, you may be in the best position to advocate for your service member if he or she disagrees with or has questions about the outcome of the medical board or the conditions of discharge. Professional advocates available to help your family may include [military legal counselors](#), private attorneys who specialize in military issues or a [Veterans Service Officer, VA accredited representative](#) or VA-recognized [Veterans Service Organization](#) representative.
- Learn about the systems of support available to your family through the DoD’s [Warrior Care](#) website, and better understand the benefits and entitlements that may be available to your family by reading the [Wounded, Ill, and/or Injured Compensation and Benefits Handbook](#). To learn more about benefits and services specific to your service member’s branch of service, visit the appropriate Warrior Care website: [Army](#), [Marine Corps](#), [Navy](#) and [Air Force](#). The [Special Operations Community](#) has its own Warrior Care program, or Care Coalition, website.
- Plan to attend the DoD’s [Transition Assistance Program](#). Schedule TAP by talking to your service member’s medical board counselors or PEBLO or by contacting the transition assistance office at an [installation](#) near you. Find out more about the opportunities available for military spouses through TAP and other resources by viewing the Stepping Beyond videos and fact sheets in the Transition Assistance and Training category.
- Work with your service member to calculate his or her severance pay or retirement pay after transition from the military. Staff at your [installation](#) finance office can help with this as can the Defense Finance and Accounting Service [website](#). To speak to DFAS Customer Service, call 800-321-1080. The Stepping Beyond videos and fact sheets titled Understanding Military Retirement Pay under the Legacy Retirement System and Separation Pay Eligibility and Considerations may offer additional insights.
- Understand your service member’s DoD disability rating and his or her eligibility for disability pay and other financial benefits and entitlements from the DoD. Seek assistance from your [installation](#) finance office or the [DFAS Disability Entitlements](#) web pages to ensure your service member and family receive the financial benefits and entitlements for which you are eligible. If your service member is a Wounded Warrior, the DFAS Wounded Warrior Pay Support [team](#) can also help.
- If a claim for [VA disability compensation](#) has not been submitted by your service member or on behalf of your service member during the medical evaluation process, ensure that your service member submits a [disability claim](#) to the VA. If your service member has received his or her disability rating from the VA, it is important that you and your service member agree with the rating and understand the benefits and entitlements that the VA will provide based on the rating. For help filing a VA claim or learning more about your service member’s VA rating, [contact](#) a Veterans Service Officer, VA accredited representative or VA-recognized Veterans Service Organization representative. The Stepping Beyond video and fact sheet Understanding the VA Disability Claim Process for Transitioning Military Families can also help.
- Be aware that your service member may be required to waive a portion of his or her DoD retired pay if receiving VA disability compensation pay. The Stepping Beyond video and fact sheet Understanding VA Disability Ratings and Compensation is a good source of information on this topic. Visit the DFAS website to learn if your service member is eligible for [programs](#) that allow him or her to recover some or all of the waived retired pay and if your service member needs to apply. Representatives from [DFAS](#) can help answer any questions you may have.
- If your service member’s medical discharge stems from a traumatic injury, check on his or her coverage and [eligibility](#) under Servicemember’s Group Life Insurance Traumatic Injury Protection.



Steps to Consider (cont.)

- Your service member may be eligible for disability benefits from the Social Security Administration in addition to those from the DoD and VA. The SSA has information on its website with specific [information](#) for wounded warriors and disabled veterans.
- Investigate your options for continued health care and coverage for your service member and your family before transition. The MySTeP Stepping Beyond category Health Care, Dental and Vision provides information and resources for military spouses who are helping their families make health care decisions during transition from the military. Find out more about your family's TRICARE options after medical discharge on the TRICARE website by visiting the [Injured on Active Duty](#) page. The VA's [health care](#) site provides information about VA health care for your service member and possibly even for your [family](#) depending on your service member's VA disability rating. [HealthCare.gov](#) is a resource for information and help if you and your dependent children do not qualify for continued TRICARE coverage or for health care from the VA. For in-person assistance, locate a TRICARE beneficiary counseling assistance coordinator on an [installation](#) near you, or talk to a VA health care representative at your nearest [VA medical center or clinic](#).
- If employment or continuing education is a concern for either you or your service member after transition from the military, explore the many resources available. The DoD offers programs for disabled service members such as [Operation Warfighter](#) and the [Education and Employment Initiative](#). Your service member may also be eligible for a higher level of [veterans' preference](#) when applying for government jobs. As a military spouse, you may be able to [use your service member's veterans' preference](#) if he or she is unable to use it. The VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment [services](#) provide job training, employment accommodations and career readiness skills to those transitioning from the service as a result of a medical discharge. Spouses of disabled service members may also apply for [employment benefits](#) for dependent family members from the VA. As the spouse of a service member with disabilities, you may also get help paying for school or job training through the Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance [program](#) at the VA. The Department of Labor, through [American Job Centers](#), offers local employment and training services through the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program to provide training and employment opportunities, including apprenticeships and on-the-job training. Military spouses are also eligible for employment training and support. For information and resources designed just for military spouses, view the videos and fact sheets in the Employment Assistance category of Stepping Beyond.
- If you have to take time off from work to care for your service member, you may be entitled to take unpaid, job-protected leave under [The Family and Medical Leave Act](#).
- Additional caregiver benefits are available to military spouses who qualify. TRICARE provides [respite care](#) to primary caregivers of service members injured in the line of duty. The VA also offers support to military spouses who care for a disabled service member through their VA [Caregiver Support Program](#) and through the [Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers](#).
- Medical discharge can create stress for your family. You are encouraged to seek professional help for your service member, yourself or anyone in your family who is feeling overwhelmed or experiencing intense stress. [Military OneSource](#) offers free, non-medical counseling for the families of medically discharged service members. Visit Military OneSource for more information, or call a consultant directly at 800-342-9647. The Stepping Beyond category covering Emotional Health Support introduces information and resources to help you.
- If your service member is deemed unfit for duty due to a medical condition unrelated to service or will separate with a dishonorable discharge, your family may be ineligible for some of the benefits mentioned in this fact sheet. View the "Transitioning with a Discharge Other than Honorable" video and fact sheet to get information about resources for help and support. Your family may decide to seek [legal counsel](#) to help you understand the rules and options for separation without disability benefits. You may also help your service member petition his or her service board for a [Correction of Military Records](#).



Resources

Warrior Care Resources

- U.S. Department of Defense Warrior Care: <https://warriorcare.dodlive.mil/>
- Wounded, Ill, and/or Injured Compensation and Benefits Handbook: <https://warriorcare.dodlive.mil/2019/06/department-of-defense-compensation-and-benefits-handbook-for-wounded-ill-and-or-injured-service-members/>

Service-specific Warrior Care programs

- US Army Warrior Care and Transition Program: <http://wct.army.mil/>
- US Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment: <http://www.woundedwarrior.marines.mil/>
- US Navy Wounded Warrior Safe Harbor: <http://www.navywoundedwarrior.com>
- US Air Force Wounded Warrior Program: <http://www.woundedwarrior.af.mil>
- US Special Operations Command Warrior Care Program (Care Coalition): <http://www.socom.mil/care-coalition/>
- National Resource Directory: <https://nrd.gov/>

Transition Assistance Resources

- DoD's Transition Assistance Program: <https://www.dodtap.mil/>

Locate a transition assistance office: <https://installations.militaryonesource.mil/>

- In the dropdown menu, choose "I'm looking for a program or service." Then, type in "Transition Assistance Program" in the "I'm choosing from" text field. Next, you'll be asked to filter by installation or zip code. After making your selection, select the "Search" button.

Financial Resources:

Locate a finance office: <https://installations.militaryonesource.mil/>

- In the dropdown menu, choose "I'm looking for a program or service." Then, type in "Finance Office" in the "I'm choosing from" text field. Next, you'll be asked to filter by installation or zip code. After making your selection, select the "Search" button.
- Defense Finance and Accounting Service website: <https://www.dfas.mil/>
- DFAS Disability Entitlements web pages: <https://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/disability/disability.html>
- DFAS Wounded Warrior Pay Support Team: <https://www.dfas.mil/militarymembers/woundedwarrior/woundedwarriorpay.html>
- DFAS VA Waiver and Retired Pay/CRDP/CRSC Adjustments: <https://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/disability/VA-Waiver-and-Retired-Pay--CRDP--CRSC.htm>

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Disability Compensation Resources

- VA Disability Compensation: <https://www.va.gov/disability/>
- How to file a VA Claim: <https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/>
- Locate a Veterans Service Officer, VA accredited representative or VA-recognized Veterans Service Organization representative: <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/vso-search> or <https://www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation/index.asp>
- Servicemember's Group Life Insurance Traumatic Injury Protection: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/insurance/tsgli.asp>

Social Security Resources

- Social Security Benefits for Wounded Warriors and disabled veterans: <https://www.ssa.gov/people/veterans/>

Health Care Resources

Locate a TRICARE beneficiary counseling assistance coordinator: <https://installations.militaryonesource.mil/>

- In the dropdown menu, choose "I'm looking for a program or service." Then, type in "Beneficiary Counseling Assistance Coordinators" in the "I'm choosing from" text field. Next, you'll be asked to filter by installation or zip code. After making your selection, select the "Search" button.



Resources (cont.)

- Tricare Injured on Active Duty page: <https://www.tricare.mil/LifeEvents/InjuredonAD>
- VA health care: <https://www.va.gov/health-care/>
- VA health care for spouses, dependents, and family caregivers: <https://www.va.gov/health-care/family-caregiver-benefits/>
- Find a VA medical center or clinic: <https://www.va.gov/find-locations/>

Employment and Education Resources

- Operation Warfighter: <https://warriorcare.dodlive.mil/carecoordination/operation-warfighter/>
- Education and Employment Initiative: <https://warriorcare.dodlive.mil/carecoordination/e2i/>
- Feds Hire Vets veterans' preference: <https://www.fedshirevets.gov/job-seekers/veterans-preference/>
- Feds Hire Vets family member preference: <https://www.fedshirevets.gov/job-seekers/veterans-preference/family-member-preference/>
- VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment through the Integrated Disability Evaluation System: <https://www.va.gov/careers-employment/vocational-rehabilitation/ides/>
- VA Employment Benefits for dependent family members: <https://www.va.gov/careers-employment/dependent-benefits/>
- VA Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance: <https://www.va.gov/education/survivor-dependent-benefits/dependents-education-assistance/>
- U.S. Department of Labor Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program- contact an American Jobs Center and ask about the DVOP
- FMLA Fact Sheet: Military Caregiver Leave for a Veteran under the Family and Medical Leave Act: <https://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs28mb.pdf>

Caregiver Resources

- TRICARE respite care: <https://tricare.mil/respite>
- VACaregiver Support Program: <https://www.caregiver.va.gov/>
- VA Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers: <https://www.va.gov/health-care/family-caregiver-benefits/comprehensive-assistance/>
- Military OneSource non-medical counseling for caregivers: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/confidential-help/non-medical-counseling/military-onesource/eligibility-for-confidential-non-medical-support-services>

Legal Resources

Locate a legal advisor: <https://installations.militaryonesource.mil/>

- In the dropdown menu, choose "I'm looking for a program or service." Then, type in "Legal Services/JAG" in the "I'm choosing from" text field. Next, you'll be asked to filter by installation or zip code. After making your selection, select the "Search" button.
- Armed Forces Legal Services Locator: <https://legalassistance.law.af.mil/>
- National Archives Correcting Military Service Records information: <https://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/correct-service-records.html>

Related MySTeP Topics

Benefits and Entitlements

- Understanding the VA Disability Claim Process for Transitioning Military Families

Financial Planning for Transition

- Understanding VA Disability Ratings and Compensation

Employment Assistance

- Focusing on your Career as your Family Transitions from the Military: Overcoming Employment Challenges

Special Considerations for Transition

- Leaving the Military with a Discharge or Dismissal that is Other than Honorable