

Prosthetic and Sensory Aids

Veterans receiving VA care for any condition may receive VA prosthetic appliances, equipment and services, such as home respiratory therapy, artificial limbs, orthopedic braces and therapeutic shoes, wheelchairs, powered mobility, crutches, canes, walkers, special aids, appliances, optical and electronic devices for visual impairment and other durable medical equipment and supplies.

Veterans who are approved for a guide or service dog may also receive service dog benefits including veterinary care and equipment.

VA medical services include diagnostic audiology and diagnostic and preventive eye care services. VA will provide hearing aids and eyeglasses to the following Veterans:

- Those with any compensable service-connected disability.
- Those who are former Prisoners of War (POWs).
- Those who were awarded a Purple Heart.
- Those in receipt of benefits under Title 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) 1151.
- Those in receipt of an increased pension based on being rated permanently housebound or in need of regular aid and attendance.
- Those with vision or hearing impairment resulting from diseases or the existence of another medical condition for which the Veteran is receiving care or services from VHA, or which resulted from treatment of that medical condition, e.g., stroke, polytrauma, traumatic brain injury, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, vascular disease, geriatric chronic illnesses, toxicity from drugs, ocular photosensitivity from drugs, cataract surgery, and/or other surgeries performed on the eye, ear, or brain resulting in vision or hearing impairment.
- Those with significant functional or cognitive impairment evidenced by deficiencies in the ability to perform activities of daily living. but not including normally occurring visual or hearing impairments. Note: Veterans with normally occurring visual and/or hearing impairments that interfere with their medical care are eligible for eyeglasses and hearing aids.
- Those who have vision or hearing impairment or combined visual and hearing impairments severe enough that it interferes with their ability to participate actively in their own medical treatment. Note: The term "severe" is to be interpreted as a vision and/or hearing loss that interferes with or restricts access to, involvement in, or active participation in health care services (e.g., communication or reading medication labels). The term is not to be interpreted to mean that a severe hearing or vision loss must exist to be eligible for hearing aids or eyeglasses.
- Veterans who have a service-connected hearing disability that contributes to a loss of communication ability. However, hearing aids are to be provided only as needed for the service-connected hearing disability. Nonservice-connected (NSC) Veterans are eligible for hearing aids or eyeglasses on the basis of medical need. All such Veterans (including Medal of Honor recipients who do not have entitling conditions or circumstances and catastrophically disabled

Veterans) must receive a hearing evaluation by a state-licensed audiologist prior to determining eligibility for hearing aids or an appropriate evaluation by an optometrist or ophthalmologist prior to determining eligibility for eyeglasses to establish medical justification for provision of these devices. These Veterans must meet the following criteria for eligibility based on medical need:

- Be enrolled at VA medical facility where they receive their health care; and
- Have hearing or vision loss that interferes with or restricts communication to the extent that it affects their active participation in the provision of health care services as determined by an audiologist or an eye care practitioner or provider.

For additional information, contact the prosthetic chief or representative at the nearest VA medical center or go to www.prosthetics.va.gov.

Home Improvements and Structural Alterations

VA provides up to \$6,800 lifetime benefits for service-connected Veterans/Servicemembers and up to \$2,000 lifetime benefits for nonservice-connected Veterans to make home improvements and/ or structural changes necessary for the continuation of treatment or for disability access to the Veterans/Servicemembers home and essential lavatory and sanitary facilities.

Modifications can include but are not limited to: Ramps allowing entrance to, or exit from, the Veterans/Servicemembers primary residence; Widening of doorways to allow access to essential lavatory and sanitary facilities; Raising or lowering kitchen or bathroom sinks and/or counters; Improving entrance paths or driveways in immediate area of the home to facilitate access to the home by the Veteran/Servicemember; Improving plumbing or electrical systems made necessary due to installation of dialysis equipment or other medically sustaining equipment in the home.

For application information, contact the Prosthetic Representative at the nearest VA medical center.