



You have some important rights in your claim with VA. You do not have to handle your case by yourself, and you do not have to deal with us only through the mail. On this page we will tell you about your right to have your own representative. We will also explain your right to a personal hearing.

WHAT IS A REPRESENTATIVE?

A representative is a person who helps you tell us your side of the story. The representative can help you with written materials you send us. He or she can also go with you to a hearing if you decide you want one.

WHO CAN BE MY REPRESENTATIVE?

There are three kinds of representatives. Each is explained below:

- You can choose an employee of a veterans organization or other service organization which is recognized by VA. On page 2 of this form we have a list of some service organizations that could represent you free of charge.

OR

- You can get a lawyer. The lawyer might work in private practice or for Legal Aid.

OR

- You can get an agent. An agent is anyone other than a lawyer or a service organization who is authorized by VA to speak for you or help you tell your side of the story.

If you don't have a representative and would like one, tell us who you want to represent you. then we'll send you the forms and information you'll need to name your representative.

WHAT IS A PERSONAL HEARING?

A personal hearing is a meeting where you can talk to us about a decision we have made or a decision we are going to make. In most cases, the person who "hears" your claim will be the person who makes the decision. You should bring evidence to help us understand your side of the story.

CAN I BRING SOMEONE TO THE HEARING?

Yes. Besides your representative, you can bring witnesses. A witness is anyone who has personal knowledge about your claim and can give us useful information.

If you don't want a representative, but still want someone to help you at the hearing, one of our Veterans Services Representatives (VSRs) can go to the hearing with you. However, you will need to tell us ahead of time so that the VSR can study your case.

WHAT DOES VA PROVIDE FOR THE HEARING?

Generally the hearing is held at the Regional Office that has your records. We'll provide the room and tape the hearing. Where available, your hearing can also be held at a local VA hospital through a closed circuit TV system. These services are free.

We will not be able to pay for your travel, meals, or other expenses.

HOW CAN I REQUEST A HEARING?

If you'd like a personal hearing, simply write to us and tell us you want one. You can request a hearing by writing to your Regional Office of Jurisdiction (ROJ). To find your local office go to the following website: www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/offices. Click on the state in which the veteran resides to find the address of the benefits office.

WHEN MUST I REQUEST A HEARING?

If we receive your request for a hearing **within 30 days** from the date of our letter, we will not make any decisions until we hold the hearing and review the hearing testimony and any evidence presented.

After 30 days you may request a hearing, but we may have already made a decision as explained in our letter.

RECOGNIZED SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Membership in an organization is not a prerequisite to appointment of the organization as a claimant's representative. The following is a listing of national, regional, or local organizations recognized by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs in the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of claims under laws administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. For the list of accredited veterans service organizations go to <https://www.va.gov/ogc/recognizedvsos.asp>

African American PTSD Association	Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)
American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor, Inc.	National Association of County Veterans Service Officers, Inc.
American Legion	National Association for Black Veterans, Inc.
American Red Cross	National Veterans Legal Services Program
American Veterans Committee	National Law School Veterans Clinic Consortium
American Veterans (AMVETS)	National Veterans Organization of America
Armed Forces Services Corporation	Navajo Nation Veterans Administration
Army and Air Force Mutual Aid Association	Navy Mutual Aid Association
Army and Navy Union, USA	Paralyzed Veterans of America, Inc.
Blinded Veterans Association	Polish Legion of American Veterans, U.S.A.
Catholic War Veterans of the U.S.A.	Swords to Plowshares, Veterans Rights Organization
Dale K. Graham Veterans Foundation	The Retired Enlisted Association
Disabled American Veterans	United Spanish War Veterans of the United States
Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association	United Spinal Association, Inc.
Fleet Reserve Association	Veterans of Foreign Wars
Green Beret Foundation	Veterans of Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition
Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.	Veterans of World War I of the U.S.A., Inc.
Italian American War Veterans of the United States, Inc.	Vietnam Veterans of America
Jewish War Veterans of the United States	Veterans' Voice of America
Legion of Valor of the United States of America, Inc.	Wounded Warrior Project
Marine Corps League	

Although agency titles vary, the following States and possessions maintain veterans service agencies which are recognized to help people with their claims. Contact your state office of veterans affairs at <https://www.va.gov/statedva.htm>, should you need further assistance with the application process.

Alabama	Illinois	Nebraska	Puerto Rico
American Samoa	Iowa	Nevada	Rhode Island
Arizona	Kansas	New Hampshire	South Carolina
Arkansas	Kentucky	New Jersey	South Dakota
California	Louisiana	New Mexico	Tennessee
Colorado	Maine	New York	Texas
Connecticut	Maryland	North Carolina	Utah
Delaware	Massachusetts	North Dakota	Vermont
Florida	Michigan	Northern Mariana Islands	Virginia
Georgia	Minnesota	Ohio	Virgin Islands
Guam	Mississippi	Oklahoma	Washington
Hawaii	Missouri	Oregon	West Virginia
Idaho	Montana	Pennsylvania	Wisconsin
			Wyoming

NOTE: If you decide you want a representative to act on your behalf from the lists above and/or want a hearing, complete a VA Form 21-4138, *Statement in Support of Claim*, and mail to: **Department of Veterans Affairs, Evidence Intake Center, P.O. Box 4444, Janesville WI, 53547-4444**. VA forms are available at www.va.gov/vaforms.