



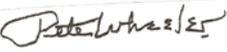
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May 7, 2012

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Veteran Patients of State War Veterans' Homes and Family Members

**FROM:** Pete Wheeler, Commissioner 

**SUBJECT:** Collection of the Value of the VA's Aid and Attendance (A&A) Pension Benefit from Veteran Patients of Georgia's State Veterans' Homes

The legislation commonly referred to as House Bill 535 that authorizes the Veterans Service Board to provide by rule and regulation for a reasonable fee for residency in and services provided by the state's war veterans' homes in Augusta and Milledgeville was signed into law on May 1, 2012 and will be effective on July 1, 2012. While this department did not advocate for, or request this law, we have been charged with implementing it and we have started the process to do so.

We want to assure everyone the fee to be established and charged will not begin on July 1, 2012. So, for the foreseeable future there will be no change in the way our homes do business and veteran patients will not be paying for their residency in and services of the homes. At this time, there is no need for veteran patients or their families to take any action related to claims or income verifications in anticipation of the implementation of this law.

The new law requires Georgia's Veterans Service Board to approve the establishment of the fee and related processes to collect it. The reason this law was passed was to obtain an additional revenue stream in addition to the state appropriations and VA per diem payments in order to provide nursing home care to more of Georgia's veterans than can be supported by the state's tight budget, especially during economic times like we have experienced in Georgia over the past four to five years.

The intention of the department and the Veterans Service Board is to establish the fee at the level equal to no more than the maximum daily value of the VA's A&A pension benefit for a single veteran. This VA benefit is provided in federal law for the purpose of assisting veterans with paying the costs of direct medical care. Nursing home care, such as that provided by our state's war veterans' homes, is covered by this pension benefit. Please note, the maximum value of the A&A pension benefit for a single veteran currently is considerably less than the more than \$200.00 per day charged in community nursing homes for private pay patients for essentially the same services. Because the A&A pension benefit is paid to the veteran, but not to providers of care, the state must charge a fee in order to receive the value of the benefit. For more information on the A&A pension benefits, you may contact our Veterans Field Service Office at your state war veterans' home, or in your local community.

We anticipate the proposed rule and regulation will be presented to the Veterans Service Board for review and approval in the September – October 2012 time frame. We will keep you posted during the coming months on the progress of this approval process. If you have questions concerning what is happening, please speak with the executive director of your home, or our Veterans Field Service Office staff at your home.