State Benefits for Georgia Veterans

Disclaimer: This ebook is intended for informational purposes only, and no assurance of benefits is implied. To verify eligibility, please contact the GDVS[1].

Georgia is proud of the benefits available to veterans in the state.

This ebook is intended to provide an overview of these benefits with general explanations and descriptions of each.

For a full understanding of any benefit, as well as assistance applying, please visit any office [2] of the Georgia Department of Veterans Service (GDVS).

The GDVS exists to serve the veterans of Georgia and their families. The department offers a wide range of superb services and programs, including excellent veterans benefits assistance; devoted claims and appeals support; skilled nursing home care; compassionate cemetery committal services; and rewarding veterans education, on-the-job training, and apprenticeship training program management.

GDVS representatives strive to ensure Georgia's veterans receive all of the federal and state benefits to which they are entitled.

For more information regarding benefits or other veterans issues, call 404-656-2300 or visit veterans.georgia.gov [3].

The benefits described in this ebook are available to Georgia veterans pursuant to the authority of the state constitution, the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, and the authority vested in the GDVS and other state government agencies.

References to specific sections of the law governing certain benefits are included in an appendix.

Please remember - no benefit is automatic; eligible veterans must apply for their earned benefits in order to receive them.

Browse these benefits by topic or download the full "State Benefits for Georgia Veterans [4]" book.

Defining "Veteran"

For most purposes in Georgia law, the term "veteran" is used to mean someone who has, in the past, served in one of the U.S. armed services and is now a civilian.

However, many veterans benefits are limited to those with an honorable discharge or at least require the character of discharge to be other than dishonorable. *(These restrictions are noted in the individual benefit descriptions.)*

Generally, the term "veteran" does not include anyone currently on active duty. However, some benefits may also be available to those on active duty or to current members of the Georgia National Guard or Reserves. *(These exceptions are noted in the individual benefit descriptions.)*

Tax Exemptions

Regarding Tax Exemptions

This book describes tax exemptions as they are written in Georgia law. However, the administration of tax exemptions is as interpreted by the tax commissioners of Georgia?s 159 counties.

GDVS personnel will assist veterans in obtaining the necessary documentation for filing, but the actual filing is left to the veteran.

The GDVS makes no guarantees regarding the awarding of tax exemptions.

Abatement of Income Taxes for Combat Deaths

Georgia law provides that service personnel who die as a result of wounds, disease, or injury incurred while serving in a combat zone as a member of the U.S. armed forces are exempt from all Georgia income taxes for the taxable year of death. Additionally, such taxes shall not apply or any prior taxable year ending on or after the first day served in the combat zone.

Ad Valorem Tax on Vehicles

This exemption applies to either the annual property tax or the title tax, whichever is applicable.

This exemption is for veterans who are verified by VA to be 100 percent totally and permanently service-connected disabled and veterans who are receiving or who are entitled to receive statutory awards from VA for:

(1) loss or permanent loss of use of one or both feet;
(2) loss or permanent loss of use of one or both hands;
(3) loss of sight in one or both eyes; or
(4) permanent impairment of vision of both eyes to a prescribed degree.

Exemption is granted on one vehicle the veteran owns and upon which the free Disabled Veteran (DV) license plate is attached. Also exempt are veterans who qualify for the Purple Heart or Medal of Honor specialty license plates.

Business Certificate of Exemption

Georgia veterans are eligible for an exemption from any occupation tax, administrative fee, or regulatory fee imposed by local governments for peddling, conducting a business, or practicing a profession or semi-profession, if they meet all of these conditions:

- discharged under honorable conditions
- service-connected disability rating of 10 percent (wartime veterans) or 25 percent (peacetime veterans)
- income is not liable for state income taxes

Extension of Filing Deadline for Combat Deployment

The tax filing deadline for combat deployed military personnel (those who served on active duty as members of the U.S. armed forces in combat activities during a period designated by the President) is extended until 180 days after such deployment ends.

Sales Tax Exemption for Vehicle Purchase/Adaptation

A disabled veteran who receives a VA grant for the purchase and special adapting of a vehicle is exempt from paying the state sales tax on the vehicle (only on the original grant).

Disabled Veteran Homestead Tax Exemption

This exemption is available to honorably discharged Georgia veterans who are considered disabled according to any of several criteria.

In order to qualify, the disabled veteran must own the home and use it as a primary residence. The exemption extends to surviving unremarried spouses and minor children as long as they remain in the homestead or a subsequent homestead in the same county.

Available to:

- Honorably discharged Georgia veterans considered disabled by any of these criteria:
    - VA-rated 100 percent disabled
    - VA-rated less than 100 percent disabled but paid at the 100 percent rate due to unemployability
    - Entitled to receive a statutory award from VA for:
        - Loss or permanent loss of use of one or both feet
        - Loss or permanent loss of use of one or both hands
        - Loss of sight in one or both eyes
        - Permanent impairment of both eyes *
- Surviving, unremarried spouses of qualified deceased veterans
- Surviving minor children of qualified deceased veterans

* ? Central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye (with corrective glasses) or central visual acuity of more than 20/200 if there is a field defect in which the peripheral field has contracted to such an extent that the widest diameter of visual field subtends on angular distance no greater than 20 degrees in the better eye.

Per the state constitution, the amount of this exemption is the greater of $32,500 or the maximum amount allowable under 38 U.S.C. 2101. (The maximum amount is $60,000 plus an index factor, which currently adjusts the total to $63,780.)

For those who were not aware of the amount of the authorized exemption, it is possible to file a claim for a refund of taxes that have been overpaid. Any claim for a refund must be filed within three years after the date of payment.

To apply, take proof of qualifying service, proof of residency, and a copy of VA disability rating letter (or letter from an authorized physician) to a GDVS Veterans Field Service Office [2]. A GDVS service officer will confirm eligibility and issue a letter to be taken to the county tax commissioner's office.

For more information on tax exemptions, visit the Georgia Department of Revenue [5], call 404-724-7000, contact your county tax commissioner's office, or consult a tax professional.

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GDVS personnel will assist veterans in obtaining the necessary documentation for filing, but the actual filing is left to the veteran.

The GDVS makes no guarantees regarding the awarding of tax exemptions.

Other Homestead Tax Exemptions

There are a variety of homestead tax exemptions for Georgians who own their home and use it as their primary residence.

For more information on tax exemptions, visit the Georgia Department of Revenue [5], call 404-724-7000, contact your county tax commissioner's office, or consult a tax professional.

Standard Homestead Exemption

A $2,000 deduction for all qualifying homeowners.

10-Acre Exemption for 65 and Older

An exemption from all state ad valorem taxes on the home (and up to 10 acres of land surrounding the home) for those 65 or older.

$4,000 Exemption for 65 and Older

A $4,000 exemption from all state and county ad valorem taxes on the home for those 65 and older, provided the income* of the owner and spouse does not exceed $10,000 for the prior year.

Educational Purposes Exemption for 62 and Older

A $10,000 exemption from ad valorem taxes for educational purposes for those 62 and older, provided the income* of the owner and spouse does not exceed $10,000 for the prior year.

Floating Inflation-Proof Exemption for 62 and Older

A floating inflation-proof state and county homestead exemption, except for taxes to pay interest on and to retire bonded indebtedness, based on natural increases in the homestead's value. If the home has increased by more than $10,000, the owner may benefit from this exemption. The income* of the owner and spouse or any other person living there cannot exceed $30,000.

** - Certain exclusions may apply*

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Driving Licenses

Veteran's Driver's License - Free Version

This special version of a Georgia driver's license includes a U.S. flag and the word VETERAN prominently displayed on the front.

An honorably discharged veteran is entitled to a free veteran's driver's license if two criteria are met: Georgia residency and service during a recognized period of war or conflict.

There are two ways to meet the Georgia residency requirement:

- The veteran entered service from Georgia (as shown on DD Form 214) and is a current resident of Georgia.
- The veteran has been a legal Georgia resident for the past two consecutive years.

To meet the wartime service requirement, a veteran must have served on active duty during any of the recognized service periods. This includes service in the National Guard or the Reserves, if such service included placement on active duty during a recognized war or conflict. It does not include periodic transfer from reserve status to active duty for training purposes.

Recognized service periods:

- World War II: December 7, 1941 - December 31, 1946

- Korea: June 27, 1950 - January 31, 1955
- Lebanon Conflict: July 1, 1958 - November 1, 1958
- Vietnam: July 1, 1958 - May 7, 1975
- Berlin Conflict: August 14, 1961 - June 1, 1963.
- Dominican Republic Conflict: April 28, 1965 - Sept. 21, 1966
- Grenada Conflict: October 23, 1983 - November 21, 1983
- Panama Liberation: December 30, 1989 - February 15, 1990
- Persian Gulf: August 2, 1990 - present

A member or former member of the National Guard with 20 or more years of creditable service also qualifies. The veteran should obtain certification from the Adjutant General of the State of Georgia [6] and include it with the other required documentation.

In order to obtain a veteran's driver's license (free or paid), the applying veteran must take the required documentation to a GDVS Veterans Field Service Office [7]. A service officer will verify the veteran's eligibility and issue a Certificate of Eligibility (DS-516).

The veteran must then take the completed DS-516, together with all required identifying documents (birth certificate or passport; Social Security card; two documents showing residential address; and, if applicable, name change documentation) to a Georgia Department of Driver Services (DDS) office [8]. A DDS representative will administer a vision exam, verify the veteran's eligibility, and issue a veteran's driver's license.

For more information, call 678-413-8400 (Metro Atlanta) or 866-754-3687 (outside Metro Atlanta), or visit the Department of Driver Services [8].

Veteran's Driver's License - Paid Version

An honorably discharged veteran who does not meet the criteria (residency or wartime service) to obtain a free veteran's driver's license may obtain the license by paying the standard licensing fee.

National Guard Driver's License

Any member of the Georgia National Guard or Reserve who is in good standing and has completed at least one year of satisfactory service is eligible for a free National Guard Driver's License.

In order to apply, an eligible member should obtain a Certificate of Eligibility (DS-318) from the National Guard Commanding Officer and take it, together with all required identifying documents (birth certificate or passport; Social Security card; two documents showing residential address; and, if applicable, name change documentation) to a Georgia Department of Driver Services [8] (DDS) office. A DDS representative will administer a vision exam, verify eligibility, and issue a free National Guard driver's license.

For more information, call 678-413-8400 (Metro Atlanta) or 866-754-3687 (outside Metro Atlanta), or visit the Department of Driver Services [8].

A member of the National Guard with 20 years of service may obtain a free veteran's driver's license. Please refer to the Veteran's Driver's License [9] section.

Honorary Driver's License - Spouse

The spouse of a qualified veteran, whose disabilities preclude operating a motor vehicle, is eligible for a free honorary driver's license. Residence and qualifying service terms are the same as stated for a free veteran's driver's license [9].

The surviving unremarried spouse of an eligible deceased veteran is eligible for a free honorary driver's license. Residence and qualifying service terms are the same as stated for a free veteran's driver's license.

In order to obtain a free honorary driver's license, take proof of the spouse's qualifying service and residency to a GDVS Veterans Field Service Office [2]. Also provide verification of spouse's disabilities that preclude operating a motor vehicle or a copy of spouse's death certificate, whichever is applicable. A service officer will verify eligibility and issue a completed Certificate of Eligibility (DS-516).

The spouse must then take the completed DS-516, together with all required identifying documents (birth certificate or passport; Social Security card; two documents showing residential address; and, if applicable, name change documentation) to a Georgia Department of Driver Services [10] (DDS) office. A DDS representative will administer a vision exam, verify eligibility, and issue a free honorary driver's license.

Personal Identification Cards

Veteran's ID Card

A veteran who meets the eligibility and residency requirements for a free veteran's driver's license and still cannot obtain one may be eligible for a free veteran's ID card. A veteran is not eligible for a Georgia ID card if in possession of a valid driver's license from another state.

For clarification regarding eligibility qualifications, please refer to the Veteran's Driver's License [9] section.

In order to obtain a free veteran's ID card, the applicant must take proof of qualifying service and residency to a GDVS Veterans Field Service Office [2]. A service officer will verify eligibility and issue a completed Certificate of Eligibility (DS-516). The applicant must then take the completed DS-516, together with all required identifying documents (birth certificate or passport; Social Security card; two documents showing residential address; and, if applicable, name change documentation) to a Georgia Department of Driver Services [10] (DDS) office. A DDS representative will verify eligibility and issue a free veteran's ID card.

For more information, call 678-413-8400 (Metro Atlanta) or 866-754-3687 (outside Metro Atlanta), or visit the Department of Driver Services [10].

Honorary ID Card

The spouse of a disabled veteran who meets the eligibility and residency requirements for a free veteran's driver's license and still cannot obtain one may be eligible for a free honorary ID card.

The surviving unremarried spouse of an eligible deceased veteran may be eligible for a free honorary ID card.

A spouse or surviving spouse is not eligible if in possession of a valid driver's license from another state. For clarification regarding eligibility qualifications, please refer to the eligibility and residence requirements listed under the Veteran's Driver's License [9] section.

In order to obtain a free honorary ID card, the spouse or surviving spouse must take proof of qualifying service and residency to a GDVS Veterans Field Service Office [2]. A service officer will verify eligibility and issue a completed Certificate of Eligibility (DS-516).

The spouse must then take the completed DS-516, together with all required identifying documents (birth certificate or passport; Social Security card; two documents showing residential address; and, if applicable, name change documentation) to a Georgia Department of Driver Services [10] (DDS) office. A DDS representative will verify eligibility and issue a free honorary ID card.

License Plates

To apply for any of these plates, it is necessary to complete Form MV-9W [11] (available at dor.ga.gov/documents/forms [12]) from the Motor Vehicle Division of the Georgia Department of Revenue [13] and take it, along with a copy of your DD Form 214 (or other supporting documentation for certain plates) to your county tax office.

Veteran's License Plate

This plate has a U.S. flag background, the seal of the veteran's branch of service, and the word VETERAN.

Available to:

- Georgia veterans discharged under honorable conditions
- Surviving, unremarried spouses of qualified deceased veterans

There is no registration fee, manufacturing fee, or annual fee for one of these specialty plates. An applicant is entitled to a second plate upon payment of a $25 manufacturing fee in addition to a $20 annual fee.

Woman Veteran's License Plate

This plate has a U.S. flag background, the seal of the veteran?s branch of service, and the words WOMAN VETERAN.

Available to:

- Female Georgia veterans discharged under honorable conditions
- Surviving, unremarried spouses of qualified deceased veterans

There is no registration fee, manufacturing fee, or annual fee for one of these specialty plates. An applicant is entitled to a second plate upon payment of a $25 manufacturing fee in addition to a $20

annual fee.

Retired Military License Plate

This plate has a U.S. flag background, the seal of the veteran's branch of service, and the word RETIRED.

Available to:

- Georgia veterans who retired from active duty
- Surviving, unremarried spouses of qualified deceased veterans

There is no registration fee, manufacturing fee, or annual fee for one of these specialty plates. An applicant is entitled to a second plate upon payment of a $25 manufacturing fee in addition to a $20 annual fee.

Commemorative Service License Plate

This plate has a U.S. flag background, the seal of the veteran's branch of service, the name of the conflict, and the campaign ribbon.

Available for:

- World War II
- Korean War
- Vietnam War
- Desert Storm
- Global War on Terrorism
- War in Iraq
- War in Afghanistan

Available to:

- Georgia veterans discharged under honorable conditions
- Georgia residents on active duty
- Surviving, unremarried spouses of qualified deceased veterans and active duty service members

There is no registration fee, manufacturing fee, or annual fee for one of these specialty plates. An applicant is entitled to a second plate upon payment of a $25 manufacturing fee in addition to a $20 annual fee.

Military Medal Award License Plate

This plate has a U.S. flag background, the name of the veteran's branch of service, and the name and image of the medal.

Available for:

- Medal of Honor *
- Distinguished Service Cross (Army)
- Navy Cross
- Air Force Cross
- Defense Distinguished Service Medal
- Homeland Security Distinguished Service Medal
- Distinguished Service Medal (Army)
- Navy Distinguished Service Medal
- Air Force Distinguished Service Medal
- Coast Guard Distinguished Service Medal
- Silver Star
- Defense Superior Service Medal
- Legion of Merit
- Distinguished Flying Cross
- Bronze Star Medal
- Purple Heart *
- Air Medal

* - Special tax provisions apply to these plates; see the Tax Exemptions [14] section

Available to:

- Georgia veterans discharged under honorable conditions
- Georgia residents on active duty
- Surviving, unremarried spouses of qualified deceased veterans and active duty service members

There is no registration fee, manufacturing fee, or annual fee for one of these specialty plates. An applicant is entitled to a second plate upon payment of a $25 manufacturing fee in addition to a $20 annual fee.

Reserve Component License Plate

This plate has a U.S. flag background, the name of the reserve component, and the word RESERVE.

Available to:

- Assigned or attached members of troop program units of any branch of the active reserve components of the United States inside or outside the State of Georgia
- Retired members of any such component
- Surviving, unremarried spouses of qualified deceased members who were killed while serving in a combat arena

There is no registration fee, manufacturing fee, or annual fee for one of these specialty plates. An applicant is entitled to a second plate upon payment of a $25 manufacturing fee in addition to a $20 annual fee.

License Plates: Disabled Veterans

Disabled Veteran's License Plate

This license plate has a U.S. flag background, the International Symbol of Access, and the words DISABLED VETERAN. A motorcycle version of this plate is available.

Available to:

- Honorably discharged Georgia veterans considered disabled by any of these criteria:
  - VA-rated 100 percent totally disabled
  - VA-rated less than 100 percent disabled but paid at the 100 percent rate due to unemployability
  - Entitled to receive a statutory award from VA for:
    - Loss or permanent loss of use of one or both feet
    - Loss or permanent loss of use of one or both hands
    - Loss of sight in one or both eyes
    - Permanent impairment of both eyes *
- Surviving, unremarried spouses of qualified deceased veterans
- Surviving minor children of qualified deceased veterans

**- Central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye (with corrective glasses) or central visual acuity of more than 20/200 if there is a field defect in which the peripheral field has contracted to such an extent that the widest diameter of visual field subtends on angular distance no greater than 20 degrees in the better eye.*

Verification:

- Qualified veterans who obtain a VA entitlement letter indicating the specific disability may apply directly with the Department of Revenue's Special Tag Unit [13]. Call 404-968-3880 for more information.
- Alternatively, qualified veterans may obtain a certified statement from an authorized physician and take it to a GDVS Veterans Field Service Office [2] along with discharge paperwork or proof of active duty service and verification of residency.

Fees:

- There is no registration fee, manufacturing fee, or annual fee for this plate. An applicant is entitled to a second plate upon payment of a $25 manufacturing fee in addition to a $20 annual fee.
- Veterans with a 100 percent service-connected disability rating are exempt from ad valorem taxes on one vehicle. (See the Tax Exemptions [14] section.)

License Plates: Motorcycle

Specialty veterans license plates are available for motorcycles.

The same rules apply as for passenger vehicle versions. Due to space limitations, specialty veterans license plates for motorcycles include simpler designs than full-size plates.

To apply for any of these plates, it is necessary to complete Form MV-9W [11] (available at dor.ga.gov/documents/forms [12]) from the Motor Vehicle Division of the Georgia Department of Revenue [13] and take it, along with a copy of your DD Form 214 (or other supporting documentation for certain plates) to your county tax office.

License Plates: Special Categories

Chosin Reservoir Campaign of 1950 License Plate

Georgia veterans of the U.S. armed forces who participated in the Chosin Reservoir Campaign of 1950 in North Korea are eligible for this specialty license plate.

The surviving spouse of a qualified deceased veteran is also eligible as long as not remarried.

There is a $25 manufacturing fee. There is a $20 annual fee. An applicant is entitled to a second plate upon payment of a $25 manufacturing fee in addition to a $20 annual fee.

Gold Star License Plate

Georgians who are family (spouse, mother, father, step-parent, child, sibling or sibling's spouse) of a service member killed in action while serving in the U.S. armed forces are eligible for this specialty license plate.

There is no registration fee, manufacturing fee, or annual fee for the first plate issued to the spouse, mother, and father who were Georgia residents at the time of death of the service member. An applicant is entitled to a second plate upon payment of a $25 manufacturing fee in addition to a $20 annual fee.

For all other family members, including family members who were not Georgia residents at the time of the service member's death, a $25 manufacturing fee and a $20 annual fee apply to the first and any subsequent plates.

National Guard License Plate

Members of the Georgia National Guard are eligible for this specialty license plate.

The surviving spouse of a member of the National Guard who was killed while serving in a combat arena is also eligible as long as not remarried.

There is no registration fee, manufacturing fee, or annual fee for this plate. An applicant is entitled to a second plate upon payment of a $25 manufacturing fee in addition to a $20 annual fee.

Pearl Harbor Survivor License Plate

Georgia veterans of the U.S. armed forces who survived the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor are eligible for this specialty license plate.

The surviving spouse of a qualified deceased veteran is also eligible as long as not remarried.

There is no registration fee, manufacturing fee, or annual fee for this plate. An applicant is entitled to a second plate upon payment of a $25 manufacturing fee in addition to a $20 annual fee.

Former Prisoner of War License Plate

Georgia veterans who are former prisoners of war with a discharge from the U.S. armed forces under honorable conditions are eligible for this specialty license plate.

The surviving spouse of a qualified deceased veteran is also eligible as long as not remarried.

For purposes of this specialty license plate, "prisoner of war" is defined as a veteran who was captured and held prisoner by forces hostile to the United States while serving in the U.S. armed forces in World War II, the Korean War, or the Vietnam War.

There is no registration fee, manufacturing fee, or annual fee for this plate. An applicant is entitled to a second plate upon payment of a $25 manufacturing fee in addition to a $20 annual fee.

Hunting and Fishing Licenses

Hunting and fishing licenses are administered by the Wildlife Resources Division [15] of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources [16].

For more information, visit georgiawildlife.com [17] or call 800-366-2661.

Georgia residency is a requirement for each of the following.

Returning Veterans

Returning veterans are entitled to a free one-year honorary full privilege sportsman's license, including all state paid recreational hunting and fishing privileges.

Eligibility: Veterans discharged from active duty as members of a regular or reserve component of any branch of service, as well as Georgia National Guard members ordered to federal duty for a period of 90 days or longer.

Permanently and Totally Disabled

Veterans with a permanent and total disability rating from VA (or another government agency) for a physical or mental impairment which prevents gainful employment are eligible. Veterans disabled because of a mental impairment will only be issued a free honorary fishing license.

Totally Blind

Eligible for a free lifetime honorary fishing license.

Age 65 and Older

Eligible for a free lifetime senior hunting and fishing license.

Other Special State Provisions

Driving License Renewal Extension for Combat Deployed

Military personnel on active duty can request a Georgia driver's license/ID card renewal through the mail. Georgia also allows a six-month grace period for a service member whose Georgia driver's license expires while on active duty outside the state.

Employment Preference

A 5-point credit is extended to war veterans seeking employment with the State of Georgia [18]. A 10-point credit is extended to veterans with a VA service-connected disability rating of 10 percent or more.

Handicapped Parking

If a disabled veteran's license plate is properly displayed, the veteran is authorized to park in parking areas designated for the handicapped without obtaining special parking permits.

High School Diplomas for Certain War Veterans

Veterans who failed to receive a high school diploma due to an interruption of education by service in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam are eligible to receive their diplomas. Apply at the board of education of the school district where the veteran attended high school.

Motor Fuel Service to Handicapped

When there is an option on the price of fuel at a full-service/self-service facility, a station employee, upon request, will dispense fuel at the lower price from the self-service pump into a vehicle bearing Disabled Veteran license plates [19], if the disabled veteran is driving the vehicle and is not accompanied by a person at least 16 years of age who is not blind and does not have impaired mobility.

State Park Entrance Fee Reduction

State Park Certificate of Eligibility

This is to certify that _____, a disabled veteran, is eligible for reduced fees for use or occupancy of State Parks, Historic Sites and Recreational Areas as provided for in Code 12-3-9.1 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated. The above referenced veteran has been verified as service connected and a current Georgia resident with an honorable discharge from the _____ serving from _____ to _____.

_____
Signature of Veteran

Mark L. Williams
Commissioner
Department of Natural Resources

Certificate Number

Mike E. Roby
Commissioner
Department of Veterans Service

Georgia veterans with a discharge from the U.S. armed forces under honorable conditions and a VA service-connected disability rating are eligible for a 25 percent reduction of the entrance fee to state parks, historical sites, and recreational areas.

To apply, bring DD Form 214, verification of service-connected disability, and proof of residency to a GDVS Veterans Field Service Office [2]. A service officer will verify eligibility and forward the application to the GDVS Central Office [20]. If approved, the state park discount card will be mailed.

Vital Statistics

Veterans and their families may obtain copies of marriage, divorce, birth, and death documents without charge through the GDVS, provided the copies are to be used for establishing disability or death claims, and the request is in writing.

Other State Agencies Assisting Veterans

Besides the GDVS, there are several state agencies with interests in assisting veterans.

Many are members of the Returning Veterans Task Force [21] (RVTF), an intra-state task force that investigates how Georgia?s state government agencies can coordinate services to better assist service members transitioning from active duty back into society.

Need a transcript [22]?

Including the GDVS, which coordinates the group, the RVTF is comprised of 11 agencies.

Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities [23]
? Provides treatment and support services to people with mental health challenges and substance use disorders, and assists individuals who live with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
Contact: 404-657-2252

Georgia Department of Community Health [24]
? Provides Georgians with access to affordable, quality health care through effective planning, purchasing, and oversight.
Contact: 404-656-4507

Georgia Department of Defense [25]
? Coordinates and supervises all agencies and functions of the Georgia National Guard, including the Georgia Army National Guard, the Georgia Air National Guard, and the Georgia State Defense Force.
? Provides ready and relevant military forces to the Combatant Commanders and, with the consent of the Governor, provides command and control capabilities to support Homeland Defense and Defense Support of Civil Authorities.
Contact: 678-569-3911

Georgia Department of Human Services [26]
? Delivers a wide range of human services designed to promote self-sufficiency, safety, and well-being for all Georgians.
? Gives priority to veterans for enrollment in Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), which serves the unemployed age 55 and older looking to re-enter the workforce.
Contact: 844-694-2347

Georgia Department of Labor [27]
? Offers assistance to job-seeking veterans and their families, including job search workshops, résumé and cover letter assistance, and resources for transitioning into the civilian workforce.
Contact: 404-232-3527

Georgia Secretary of State: [28]
? Engages veterans in the elections process as members of the electorate and volunteers at the polls.
? Assists veterans in navigating the processes of applying for business, corporate, and other professional licensing.
Contact: 404-656-2881

Council of Accountability Court Judges [29]
? Assists in the development of veterans treatment courts
Contact: 404-656-2613

Technical College System of Georgia [30]
? Provides support for veterans pursuing education
Contact: 404-679-1600

University System of Georgia [31]
? Provides support for veterans pursuing education
Contact: 404-962-3000

Workforce Division of the Georgia Department of Economic Development [32]
? Offers assistance through Operation: Workforce, a program through which veterans can find tools to translate their military occupational classifications into civilian jobs and search for career opportunities with employers who have pledged to hire veterans.
Contact: 404-962-4069

Other State Agencies of Interest to Veterans

Georgia Department of Driver Services [33]
? Offers commercial and regular passenger vehicle driver?s licenses, driver?s permits, and state

identification cards.
Contact: 404-657-9300

Georgia Department of Natural Resources [34]
? Protects, conserves and enhances the state?s natural, historic and cultural resources for present and future generations.
Contact: 404-656-3500

Georgia Department of Revenue [5]
? Offers information about taxes for individuals, corporations, and tax professionals.
Contact: 855-406-5221

For general information on other Georgia state government agencies, call 1-800-GEORGIA or visit georgia.gov/agencies [35].

GDVS Services

The mission of the Department of Veterans Service is to serve Georgia's 752,000-plus veterans and their families in all matters pertaining to veterans benefits.

As part of this mission, GDVS offers a wide range of superb services and programs, including excellent veterans benefits assistance [2]; devoted appeals support [36]; skilled nursing home care [37]; compassionate cemetery committal [38] services; and rewarding veterans education [39], on-the-job training, and apprenticeship training program management.

GDVS representatives strive to ensure Georgia's veterans receive all of the federal and state benefits to which they are entitled.

Appeals Support

The GDVS Appeals Division [36] assists veterans and their families who choose to dispute the disposition of their claims for veterans benefits. Additionally, the division provides support service for claims filed at GDVS Veterans Field Service Offices [2].

GDVS Appeals Officers can assist a veteran at a personal hearing before the local VA Hearing Officer or before the Travel Section of the Board of Veterans Appeals from Washington, D.C. and the Discharge Review Boards from the Department of Defense Military Service Departments (when convened in Atlanta).

The Appeals Division is located in the same building as the Atlanta VA Regional Office [40] at 1700 Clairmont Road, Decatur, GA 30033.

Please call ahead before visiting, as this office is open on an appointment-only basis.

Contact: 404-929-5345

Education & Training

By law, the GDVS is designated as the State Approving Agency (SAA), responsible for approving and supervising all institutions and establishments in Georgia that offer education and training under the provisions of the Veterans Educational Assistance Program [41] (GI Bill).

Within the GDVS, the SAA function is performed by the Veterans Education & Training Division [39].

This division is responsible for ensuring that approved institutions and establishments meet and maintain acceptable standards so that eligible persons who attend may receive educational assistance from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

These programs must have SAA approval before veterans and other eligible persons may receive educational benefits (GI Bill) from VA under the authority of Title 38, U.S. Code and Chapter 1606 Title 10.

Federal and state laws require stringent regulatory compliance of all institutions and establishments approved for veterans attendance. The responsibilities of approval, annual inspections, and ensuring corrective action when necessary, constitute a vital function of the Georgia SAA.

The SAA has the function of ensuring educational institutions and establishments meet and maintain acceptable standards so eligible persons who attend may receive educational assistance from VA. This includes all public and private schools and all establishments offering apprenticeship and other on-the-job training.

The satisfactory performance of these duties requires SAA personnel to have extensive knowledge in education administration and a full understanding of the laws and regulations that govern and control the Veterans Educational Assistance Program.

For further information concerning approved universities, colleges, technical and trade schools; flight schools; correspondence schools; apprenticeship and on-the-job training programs, contact the SAA staff.

Contact: 404-656-2306 or saaga@vs.state.ga.us [42].

Apprenticeship Programs

Apprenticeship training is similar to OJT, but includes theoretical instruction as well as practical training. While learning a trade as an "apprentice," the veteran is taught by a skilled worker, a "journeyman." Once approved, the veteran receives VA education benefits while working full-time and earning wages.

Apprenticeship programs differ from OJT in that they are normally two or more years in length. They require a minimum of 144 hours of related classroom instruction per year. The employer, local technical college, union, or the Federal Bureau of Apprenticeship Training [43] usually provides classroom instruction.

The SAA approves non-registered programs. Both the Federal Bureau of Apprenticeship Training and the SAA approve registered apprenticeship programs. Some examples of approved programs are carpenter, electrician, brick mason, and plumber.

The full list of approved on-the-job training programs is maintained by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and is available online through VA's WEAMS institution search tool [44].

On-the-Job Training Programs

On-the-Job (OJT) programs may be approved for a wide variety of entry-level jobs. Once approved, a veteran participates in the OJT program while working under the employer's supervision. The veteran receives monthly VA education benefits in addition to regular salary.

In order to apply, a veteran must be employed full-time with an employer who can provide training in a bona fide trade or skill in which the veteran is not already qualified.

The full list of approved on-the-job training programs is maintained by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and is available online through VA's WEAMS institution search tool [44].

Public Information

The GDVS Public Information Division supports the department's internal and external communications and outreach missions, with the ultimate goal of keeping Georgia's veterans and their families informed of important news and events.

The division maintains veterans.georgia.gov [3], which is home to the department's official news feed [45] and calendar of events [46] as well as the most up-to-date version of this ebook, directories, and information about the other divisions of the GDVS.

The division continuously updates Georgians about important veterans news via social media. Stay informed by joining the GDVS communities on Facebook [47] and Twitter [48].

The division produces informational materials such as this book, brochures, cards, calendars, and other items.

Contact: 404-656-5933 or gavetsvc@vs.state.ga.us [49].

State War Veterans Homes

There are two skilled nursing care homes for eligible war veterans located in Georgia. One is in Augusta [50] and the other is in Milledgeville [51].

The primary mission of these homes is to provide high quality skilled nursing care to veterans while seeking to improve their quality of life and overall health.

Eligibility criteria:

The veteran must be a current Georgia resident and meet one of the following conditions:

- Resided in Georgia two years immediately preceding the date of application
- Resided in Georgia five or more of the past 15 years

The veteran must have served on active duty in the U.S. armed forces during one of the following wartime periods:

  - World War II: December 7, 1941 - December 31, 1946
  - Korea: June 27, 1950 - January 31, 1955
  - Cold War: January 31, 1955 - July 1, 1964
  - Vietnam: July 1, 1964 - May 7, 1975
  - Persian Gulf: August 2, 1990 - present

- The veteran must have a discharge under other than dishonorable conditions.
- The veteran must be approved as eligible for skilled nursing care by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).
- The veteran must be free of contagious infectious disease and behavioral and psychiatric problems.
- The veteran must not need to be sustained by line-operated mechanical means.

To apply for admission, contact the Admissions Office [37] of one of the homes or any GDVS Veterans Field Service Office [2].

A nominal daily fee is charged. Eligible veterans may apply for the federal Aid & Attendance benefit [52] to help offset this fee. For veterans with a service-connected disability rating of 70 percent or higher or whose admission is due to a service-connected condition, the daily fee is paid in full by VA.

Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home - Augusta

The Georgia War Veterans Home in Augusta [53] is a 192-bed skilled nursing care facility located adjacent to the campus of Augusta University [54], across from the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center. It is operated under an interagency agreement between the GDVS and Augusta University.

Dedicated in 1969, the home was the first of its kind built with federal financial grant assistance. It is one of a select group of such institutions accredited by The Joint Commission [55].

Along with the provision of skilled nursing care, the home serves as a teaching facility to acquaint medical, dental, pharmacy, and allied health students with the medical conditions and diseases of the aged. This provides students with practical experience and helps them gain expertise in treating the disabled and the elderly.

Additionally, the home contains a GDVS Veterans Field Service Office [2] to assist veterans in the area.

Contact the Admissions Office [56] at 706-721-2405 for more information on how to apply.

Georgia War Veterans Home - Milledgeville

The Georgia War Veterans Home [51] is a 550-bed skilled nursing care facility comprised of four buildings located on approximately 17 acres.

The home provides skilled nursing care and specialty care for Alzheimer's residents.

The home is operated through an agreement with United Veteran Services of Georgia, an affiliate of UHS-Pruitt Corporation [57].

Additionally, the home contains a GDVS Veterans Field Service Office [2] to assist veterans in the area.

Contact the Admissions Office [58] at 478-445-4295 for more information on how to apply.

State Veterans Memorial Cemeteries

The Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemeteries [38], established for the interment of faithful and honorable military veterans, are shrines recognizing all Georgia veterans.

There are two Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemeteries, located in Glennville [59] and Milledgeville [60], open for interment of qualified veterans and dependents.

Each cemetery includes a welcome center, a chapel, in-ground interment areas, and columbariums connected by paved roadways and walkways in beautiful landscaped settings. Gravesite locators are available for the convenience of visitors.

Eligible for interment:

- Veterans with a discharge other than dishonorable
- Members of the Reserves or National Guard who were eligible for retirement pay at the time of death (or who would have been entitled to retirement pay at age 60)
- Members of the U.S. armed forces killed in the line of duty while on active duty or active duty for training
- Members of the U.S. armed forces who otherwise died on active duty
- Certain other veterans as defined in federal law
- Spouses, unmarried dependents under the age of 21, and eligible life-long dependents of any of the above

Proper paperwork is required to determine eligibility. The veteran's name; rank; serial, social security and VA claim numbers; date of birth and date of death must be provided to cemetery personnel. A copy of the veteran's DD Form 214 or other proof of service is required. A copy of the marriage certificate is required for the spouse to be buried with the veteran.

Standard upright, granite headstones are used to mark the burial sites of casketed and cremated remains. Small granite covers are used to mark the niches of cremated remains placed in columbariums.

Plots, vaults, niches, and markers are provided at no charge. Use of the committal chapel for interment

services is also free. The family is responsible for all other expenses.

The vaults provided are concrete-lined and double-depth for the veteran and spouse or dependent. (If the veteran selects interment for cremated remains, the spouse or dependent must also select interment for cremated remains.)

The GDVS pledges to honor the dignity and memory of each person. Cemetery staff will make the interment as compassionate and comfortable as possible, ensuring the committal service and any other requests are handled respectfully. They will assist family and friends in every way possible during their time of sorrow.

Business hours are from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday-Friday.

Interment hours are from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday-Friday.

Visiting hours are from 8 a.m. to dusk daily, including weekends.

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery - Glennville [59]

8819 U.S. Highway 301, Glennville, GA 30427

912-654-5398

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery - Milledgeville [60]

2617 Vinson Highway, Milledgeville, GA 31061

478-445-3363

O.C.G.A. References

The following are references to the specific sections of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated wherein the relevant law may be found: e.g., the law pertaining to Veterans Driving Licenses is found in Title 40, Chapter 5, Article 2, abbreviated as: O.C.G.A. 40-5-36.

To search the O.C.G.A., visit lexisnexis.com/hottopics/gacode [61].

Homestead Tax Exemptions

Disabled Veterans

O.C.G.A. 48-5-48

O.C.G.A. 48-5-380

Standard Homestead Exemption

O.C.G.A. 48-5-44

10-Acre Exemption for 65 and Older

O.C.G.A. 48-5-48-3

$4,000 Exemption for 65 and Older

O.C.G.A. 48-5-47

Educational Purposes Exemption for 62 and Older

O.C.G.A. 48-5-52

Floating Inflation-Proof Exemption for 62 and Older

O.C.G.A. 48-5-47-1

Other Tax Exemptions

Abatement of State Income Taxes

O.C.G.A. 48-7-37

Ad Valorem Tax on Vehicles

O.C.G.A. 48-5-478

Business Certificate of Exemption

O.C.G.A. 43-12-1

O.C.G.A. 43-12-2

Sales Tax on Vehicles

O.C.G.A. 48-8-3

State Income Tax

O.C.G.A. 40-7-36

Driving Licenses/ID Cards

Veteran's Driver's License

O.C.G.A. 40-5-36

Veteran's ID Card

O.C.G.A. 40-5-103

License Plates

Veteran

O.C.G.A. 40-2.85.1

Woman Veteran

O.C.G.A. 40-2.85.1

Retired Military

O.C.G.A. 40-2-85.1

Commemorative Service

O.C.G.A. 40-2-85.1

Military Medal

O.C.G.A. 40-2.85.1

Purple Heart (Motorcycle)

O.C.G.A. 40-2-84

Medal of Honor

O.C.G.A. 40-2-68

Reserve Component

O.C.G.A. 40-2-65

Disabled Veteran

O.C.G.A. 40-2-69

O.C.G.A. 40-2-70

O.C.G.A. 48-5-478

Chosin Reservoir

O.C.G.A. 40-2-85.2.

Gold Star

O.C.G.A. 40-2-85.3

National Guard

O.C.G.A. 40-2-66

Pearl Harbor Survivor

O.C.G.A. 40-2-85

Former Prisoner of War

O.C.G.A. 40-2-73

Hunting and Fishing Licenses

Returning Veterans

O.C.G.A. 27-2-4 (g) (1)-(2)

Permanently & Totally Disabled Veterans

O.C.G.A. 27-2-4 (a)

Permanently & Totally Disabled Residents

O.C.G.A. 27-2-4 (a)

Totally Blind Residents

O.C.G.A. 27-2-4 (b)

Residents Age 65 and Older

O.C.G.A. 27-2-3.1(f)(E)

Other Provisions

Employment Preference

5 U.S.C. 2108

Handicapped Parking

O.C.G.A. 40-6-224

O.C.G.A. 40-6-226

High School Diplomas for Certain War Veterans

O.C.G.A. 20-2-69

O.C.G.A. 20-2-70

Motor Fuel Service to Handicapped

O.C.G.A. 10-1-164.1

State Park Entrance Fee Reduction

O.C.G.A. 12-3-9.1

Vital Statistics

O.C.G.A. 38-1-1

Returning Veterans Task Force

Creation

O.C.G.A. 38-4-90

Membership

O.C.G.A. 38-4-91

Responsibilities

O.C.G.A. 38-4-92

Veterans Licensure

Professions and Businesses

O.C.G.A. 43-14-15

O.C.G.A. 43-14-16

Residential and General Contractors

O.C.G.A. 43-41-18

O.C.G.A. 43-41-19

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