



HEALTH CARE FOR REENTRY VETERANS

Healthcare for Reentry Veterans (HCRV) is a service designed to address the community Reentry needs for Veterans within 6 months of release or 4 months post release from incarceration.



2015 LOUISIANA REENTRY AND RESOURCE GUIDE

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FOREWORD

This guidebook is designed to help veterans identify options for addressing those special needs and to ease the transition from state and federal prisons or local jails for veterans who are incarcerated. It is meant to serve as a reference tool for veterans who are interested in gaining access to services at the federal, state or local level. It identifies federal benefits for which you may be eligible and provides a framework for filing claims for benefits or seeking reinstatement of benefits for which you may have already been determined eligible. Finally, it provides addresses for resources or links to web sites that might be beneficial in preparing for your release. It is our hope that this guidebook will support your reentry efforts, ease your quest for reunification with family and friends, identify resources for medical, mental health or substance abuse treatment, and provide guidance for obtaining disability payments, employment, training, or rehabilitation.

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Begin thinking about what specifically you will need upon release. Ask yourself these kinds of questions: Will I need housing? Will I need medical, substance abuse, or mental health care? Do I need to learn a job skill? Do I have any other legal issues, such as child support? How do I restart my VA checks or Supplemental Security Income (SSI)?

Acknowledgement: We would like to recognize and thank: 1) the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans which provided basic concepts and core information for this guide through its "Planning for Your Release" guide funded by the U.S. Department of Labor; 2) the Veterans Incarcerated Workgroup of Walla Walla, Washington, for the concept of state-specific information in its "Guidebook for Incarcerated Veterans" and for allowing the use of its guide as a template for this publication; 3) Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. for developing the first incarcerated veterans guidebook, which has inspired and informed subsequent efforts; and 4) any public domain and agency resources included in the guidebook.

Last date revised: March 2015

VA MEDICAL CENTERS

Alexandria VA Health Care System

2495 Shreveport Highway
Pineville, LA 71306-9004
(318) 466-4000
1-800-375-8387

Overton Brooks Medical Center

10 E. Stoner Avenue
Shreveport, LA 71101-4295
(318) 221-8411
1-800-863-7441

COMMUNITY BASED OUTPATIENT CLINICS:

Baton Rouge Outpatient Clinic

7968 Essen Park Avenue
Baton Rouge, La 70809
(225) 761-3400

Lafayette Outpatient Clinic

2100 Jefferson Street
Lafayette, La 70501
(337)261-0734

Bogalusa Outpatient Clinic

319 Memphis Street
Bogalusa, La 70427
(225)930-2860

Lake Charles Outpatient Clinic

4250 5th Avenue
Lake Charles, LA
(318)466-4500

Franklin Outpatient Clinic

603 Heifleigh Street
Franklin, La 70538
(337)828-9092

Monroe Outpatient Clinic

250 De Saird Plaza Drive
Monroe, LA 71203
(318)343-6100

Fort Polk Outpatient Clinic

3353 University Parkway
Leesville, La 71446
(337)392-3800

Natchitoches Outpatient Clinic

740 Keyser Avenue
Natchitoches, LA 71457
(318)357-3395

Hammond Outpatient Clinic

1131 South Morrison Avenue
Hammond, La 70403
(985)902-5026

New Orleans Outpatient Clinic

1601 Perdido Street
New Orleans, LA 70112
(504)568-0811

Houma Outpatient Clinic

1750 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Suite 107
Houma, La 70360
(985)851-0188

St. John Outpatient Clinic

247 Veterans Blvd.
Reserve, LA 70084
(504)565-4705

Jennings Outpatient Clinic

1907 Johnson Street
Jennings, La 70546
(337)824-1000

Slidell Outpatient Clinic

340 Gateway Drive
Slidell, LA 70461
1-800-935-8387

SECTION I: VA HEALTHCARE AND REENTRY SERVICES

VA HEALTH CARE ELIGIBILITY:

A former service member must have been discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.

- “Honorable” or “General Under Honorable Conditions” are qualifying.
- “Dishonorable” or “Bad Conduct” issued by general court martials are disqualifying.
- Served Active Duty (After 9/9/1980, must have served at least 24 consecutive months active duty or any amount of time in Iraq or Afghanistan).
- National Guard and Reserves must have been called to active duty (other than for training only) and completed the full period for which they were called or ordered.

The eligibility staff may register an individual with “Other than Honorable” discharge who fills out an application with the VA and are placed in a Pending Verification Status. A request for an administrative decision regarding the character of service for VA health care purposes must be made to the local VA Regional Office (VARO). This request may be submitted using a VA Form 7131, Exchange of Beneficiary Information and Request for Administrative and Adjudicative Action. In making determinations of health care eligibility the same criteria will be used as are now applicable to determinations of service connection when there is no character of discharge bar.

If you would like to apply for consideration in having your **discharge upgraded** complete DD Form 293, “Application for Review of Discharge or Dismissal from the Armed Services of the United States”. (If your discharge is over 15 years old, complete DD Form 149, “Application for Correction of Military Record” instead). Keep in mind that most of these requests are not approved. It may take several months for the board to review your application and make a decision. **It is recommended that you visit a Veteran Service Officer for assistance with completing this request after you are released from incarceration.** A list of Veteran Service Officers by parish is provided in this guide.

Your first step is to enroll in the VA system by any of the following:

- Visit any VA Medical Center or Community Based Outpatient Clinic
- On the internet go to www.va.gov.
- Call the VA Health Benefits Service Center at 877-222-VETS, Mon-Fri, 8:00 am – 8:00 pm EST for enrollment assistance.
- Complete VA Form 10-10EZ (Application for Health Benefits) with your Health Care for Reentry Veterans Specialist.

Incarcerated Veterans do not forfeit their eligibility for medical care; however, current regulations restrict VA from providing hospital and outpatient care to an incarcerated Veteran who is an inmate in an institution of another government agency when that agency has a duty to give the care or services.

This exclusion does not apply to Veterans who are released from incarceration in a prison or jail into a temporary housing program such as a Work Release Program or Halfway House. This change was effective on April 1, 2011.

REENTRY SERVICES

REENTRY SERVICES ELIGIBILITY:

For VA purposes, a **Veteran** is defined by the criteria in Section 1 and eligible for VA services.

A **Reentry Veteran** is defined as:

- A Veteran currently incarcerated at a state or federal correctional facility within 6 months of release.
- A Veteran released within the last 4 months from a state or federal correctional facility.
- A Veteran serving a state prison sentence under contract at a county, parish or other local jail facility.

REENTRY SERVICES:

The central goal of the HCRV Program is to promote successful community integration of reentry Veterans by conducting outreach to Veterans while they are incarcerated and engage them in treatment and rehabilitation programs after release. HCRV Specialists assist in:

- Preventing homelessness
- Readjusting to community life
- Abstaining from commission of new crimes or probation/parole violations

The HCRV Program includes a range of services intended to assist Veterans at a critical time during their reentry process and offers a time-limited (**from 6 months prior to release to 4 months after release**) continuum of reentry services. Not all Veterans require all services. The level of engagement with HCRV services depends on the Veteran's need and motivation for services. Services include:

- **Outreach:** Identifying Veterans in jail or prison who are within the time frame to receive reentry services.
- **Psychosocial Assessment:** Initial determination of the needs of the Veteran to develop a reentry plan. Following the Veteran's release, a clinical assessment to determine medical, psychiatric and social diagnoses occurs at the time of the medical or psychiatric evaluation at the VA medical center by the assigned provider.
- **Education:** Provide Veteran with information on reentry resources such as post-release outpatient, residential and inpatient medical, psychiatric, substance abuse and vocational rehabilitation services, post-release community services, and benefits information.
- **Post-release Case Management:** Case management is focused on enhancing the Veteran's motivation to engage in services that are appropriate to support successful community reintegration. Case management may include concrete support, referrals and direct assistance in establishing linkages with needed VA and community programs as well as providing mentoring and crisis intervention if the reentry plan is not progressing smoothly. The Case Management philosophy is to support Veterans in skill building, encourage their success, and empower them to be active in their plan and support their independence and return to community functioning.

SECTION 2: HOUSING

It is important to know that you have a place to go when released. The first step in returning to the community is finding a place to stay. Transitional or temporary housing can serve as a step toward full independence upon your release. However, there is limited bed availability for housing assistance programs, so you should begin planning as soon as possible. If you are released and find yourself homeless, emergency assistance is available. If you know that you will be homeless upon release, please contact your HCRV Specialist **within 6 months of your release** to review options and obtain a list of emergency shelters in your area. If you find yourself in need of shelter after release, please contact your local homeless coalition or Salvation Army for emergency shelters in your area.

VA's National Call Center for Homeless Veterans

Toll-free, 24/7 access: 1-877-424-3838 www.va.gov/homeless

HEALTH CARE FOR HOMELESS VETERANS PROGRAM (HCHV)

Every VA Medical Center has a **Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Coordinator** who is responsible for helping homeless veterans access VA and community-based care to end homelessness among veterans. The HCHV program provides outreach, clinical assessments and referrals for medical and mental health care, long-term transitional residential assistance, case management and linkage to permanent housing. To locate your nearest HCHV Coordinator call 1-877-222-8387 or go to www.va.gov/homeless/page.cfm?pg=21.

Grant and Per Diem Transitional Housing- provides supportive case management services to reduce substance abuse and psychiatric recidivism rates, a structured environment to assist veterans in obtaining their highest goals, prevent chronic homelessness, and provide assistance in achieving goal of greater self-determination. You must be eligible for VA healthcare to access these programs.

Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Administration Supportive Housing Program (HUD-VASH) - program is a partnership between the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the VA. The program helps veterans to secure independent housing in the community by providing rental payment assistance through "housing choice vouchers" issued by local public housing authorities and providing supportive case management services to assist the veteran with housing stability and fully integrating back into the community. Contact the appropriate Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) listed above for the area in which you are interested in residing. You must be eligible for VA healthcare and have a case management need (such as medical conditions, mental health conditions or substance use disorder) to access this program.

RESOURCE COLLABORATIVES FOR THE HOMELESS

| REGION # | REGION # |
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| <p align="center">I UNITY FOR THE HOMELESS 2475 Canal Street Suite 300 New Orleans, LA 70119 Phone: (504) 821-4496 Fax: (504) 821-4704</p> | <p align="center">II CAPITAL AREA ALILIANCE FOR THE HOMLESS 5850 Florida Blvd. Baton Rouge, LA 70806 Phone: (225) 201-0696 Fax: (225) 201-1792</p> |
| <p align="center">III LAFOURCHE, TERREBONNE, ASSUMPTION PARTNERSHIP c/o GULF COAST TEACHING FAMILY SERVICES 2509 Victoria Drive Houma, LA 70363 Phone: (985) 851-4488 Fax: (985) 853-0709</p> | <p align="center">VII HOPE FOR THE HOMELESS 520 Olive Street Suite A01 Shreveport, LA 71104 Phone: (318) 227-2100 Fax: (318) 227-0035</p> |
| <p align="center">IV ARCH THE ACADIANA REGIONAL COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS & HOUSING INC. P.O. Box 3936 Lafayette, LA 70502 Phone: (337) 235-4972 Fax (337) 234-4466</p> | <p align="center">VIII NORTHEAST LOUISIANA HOUSING AND SUPPORT SERVICES CORP. c/o THE WELLSRING ALLIANCE FOR FAMIIES, INC. 1515 Jackson Street Monroe, LA 71201 Phone: (318) 651-9314 Fax (318) 651-9320</p> |
| <p align="center">V SOUTHWESTERN LOUISIANA HOMELESS COALTION, INC P.O. Box 3052 Lake Charles, LA 70602 Phone: (337) 433-6282 Fax: (337) 433-0093</p> | <p align="center">IX NORTHLAKE CONTINUUM OF CARE COALITION (Livingston, St. Helena, St. Tammany, Tangipohoa and Washington Parishes) 405 W. Dakota Street Hammond, LA 70402 Phone: (985) 549-5373 Fax: (985) 898-6342 – call first (985) 549-2485</p> |
| <p align="center">VI CENTRAL LOUISIANA COALTION TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS P.O. Box 1303 Alexandria, LA 71309 Phone: (318) 443-0500 No Fax</p> | <p align="center">X JEFFERSON ALLIANCE FOR THE HOMELESS (Jefferson, St. Charles, St. John and St. James Parishes) c/o RESPONSIBILITY HOUSE P.O. Box 640548 Kenner, LA 70064 Phone: (504) 366-6217 Fax: (504) 366-7642</p> |

COMMUNITY SHELTERS/PROGRAMS

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| ALEXANDRIA | | |
| Pentecostals of Alexandria Grace House 2807 Levin Street Alexandria, LA 71301 318-487-8976 | Single Men | Accepts Sex Offenders |
| Reentry Solutions 1617 Branching Street #500 Alexandria, LA 71360 318-443-0189 or 800-487-8178 | Any person who has been arrested for any crime at any point in life | Membership and orientation required. Case management services and job readiness training. |
| Salvation Army 620 Beauregard Street Alexandria, LA 71301 318-442-0445 | Single Men | 21 Days Free then \$7 per night |
| BATON ROUGE | | |
| Bishop Ott Day Center Night Shelter 1623 Convention Street and 2550 Plank Road Baton Rouge, LA 70802 225-383-7343/225-355-0374 | Single Men | Handicap Accessible |
| Joseph Homes, Inc. 130 South 11 th Street Baton Rouge, LA 70802 225-336-4406 or 8770 | Single Men | Recently released homeless ex-offenders |
| Maison Des Ami of Louisiana 1050 Convention Street Baton Rouge, LA 70802 225-343-3827 | Single Men | |
| One Touch Ministry 1717 Dallas Drive Baton Rouge, LA 70806 225-205-0057 | Single Men | Sex offenders Overcomers Program \$125 per week |
| Salvation Army 7361 Airline Highway Baton Rouge, LA 70802 225-355-4483 | Single Men | 1 st night free then \$7.50 per night |
| CROWLEY | | |
| Welcome House 24292 Crowley Eunice Hwy. Crowley, LA 70526 337-783-7066 | Single men; single women; families | May require a fee if individual or family has income. |

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| GONZALES | | |
| Ascension House Ministries 1349 N. Toby Street Gonzales, LA 70737 225-268-8760 | Single Men/ Father's with children | |
| HOUMA | | |
| Bunk House Shelter 8424 Main Street Houma, LA 70363 985-876-9976 or 985-637-6088 | Single Adults Families w/children Couples w/o children | |
| Transitional Living Center 137 New Orleans Blvd. Houma, LA 70364 985-873-7784 | Single Men | Voluntary Admission; Referrals from OMH Region III |
| LAFAYETTE | | |
| Hope House Confidential Location 337-233-2437 | Single Men Single Women | Accepts HIV Positive |
| Smile #1 418/420 Oliver Street Lafayette, LA 70501 337-234-3272 (press 8) | Single and Two Parent Families | Two parent families must be married with a valid marriage license |
| Smile #3 500 St. John Street Lafayette, LA 70501 337-234-3272 | Single and Two Parent Families | In-tact families |
| St. Joseph Shelter 425 St. John Street Lafayette, LA 70501 337-235-4972 | Single Men | 21 years or older; Valid government picture ID and completed emergency shelter program |
| Salvation Army 212 Sixth Street Lafayette, LA 70501 337-237-7618 | Single Men | 7 nights free with valid ID; \$7.50 per night afterward; doors open at 3:30 pm; check in at 5:00 pm. |
| Volunteers of America Confidential Location 337-266-9956 | Single Mentally Ill Adults; Men and Women | |
| LAKE CHARLES | | |
| Center of Hope 3020 Legion Street Lake Charles, LA 70615 337-721-8068 or 337-433-4155 | Single Men Families w/children Married adult couples without children | |

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| The Potters House 3233 Kirkman Street Lake Charles, LA 70601 337-477-1116 | Single women Single parent families w/children | Homeless women without chronic mental illness |
| LEESVILLE | | |
| A.C. Dowden Shelter Confidential Location 337-239-4357 or 337-239-9754 | | Handicap Accessible |
| MANSFIELD | | |
| DeSoto Parish Temporary Shelter 113 Franklin Street Mansfield, LA 71052 318-872-0880 | Homeless families with or without children | |
| MORRERO | | |
| Jefferson Parish Care Center 1108 Baratavia Blvd. Marrero, LA 70072 504-347-0772 or 504-523-3455 | Single and Two parent families; Men w/spouse and children; mothers and children (boys up to 16) | Homeless – off the street, have been evicted or referred from another agency. |
| MINDEN | | |
| United Christian Home 104 Fuller Street Minden, LA 71055 318-382-1500 or 318-382-1503 | Single men and women; single and two parent families; adult couples | |
| MONROE | | |
| Celebrate Recovery 3201 North 7 th Street West Monroe, LA 71291 318-450-5886 | | |
| Fairhaven Homeless Shelter 1900 Garrett Road Monroe, LA 71202 318-343-9200 | Single men | Housing to men in reentry from corrections and in-patient recovery programs |
| Freed Men 500 Pine Street West Monroe, LA 71291 318-557-3850 | Single men and women; Chronically mentally ill adults | |
| Oxford House Forsythe 1709 Forsythe Avenue Monroe, LA 71201 318-322-9277 | Single men and women | Reentry housing, job training and placement. Selection based on interview and references |
| Oxford House Bayou 20000 Filhiol Street Monroe, LA 71203 318-342-9320 | | Transitional Residential Substance Abuse Services |

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| Salvation Army 105 Hart Street Monroe, LA 71202 318-325-1755 or 318-387-7158 | Single Men or Women; Adult couples; Single and two parent families w/children | 14 days free then meet with social worker to determine if more time is needed. NO fathers with children |
| Sober Nest Recovery Homes 308 Vernon Street West Monroe, LA 71291 318-307-7121 | | Housing and support services for people who need help living sober lives |
| Wellspring 718 Jackson Street Monroe, LA 71202 318-807-6200 | | |
| NEW IBERIA | | |
| Iberia Homeless Shelter, Inc. 301 Robertson Street New Iberia, LA 70560 337-369-9900 | Single and two parent families; Adult couples | |
| Smiles #2 301 Robertson Street New Iberia, LA 70560 337-369-9900 | Adult couples; Single and two parent families | If two parent family, they must be married. |
| NEW ORLEANS | | |
| Baronne Street Housing 2407 Baronne Street New Orleans, LA 70113 504-269-9311 | Families with children | working at least 30 hours per week (unless disabled) |
| Bridge House Corp 1160 Camp Street New Orleans, LA 70130 504-522-4475 or 504-522-2124 | Single men and women | Substance Abusers; 18 or older; homeless welcome |
| New Orleans Mission 1130 Oretha C. Haley/1129 Baronne Street New Orleans, LA 70113 504-523-2116 | Single Men | Handicap Accessible |
| Ozanam Inn 843 Camp Street New Orleans, LA 70130 504-523-1184 | Single Men and Women; Mothers with children | 18 or older |
| Salvation Army Center of Hope 4500 South Claiborne Avenue New Orleans, LA 70125 504-899-4569 | Single men and women; women with children; single parent families | Handicap Accessible |

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| The House of Ruth 1111 Newton Street New Orleans, LA 70114 504-784-1162 | Elderly and persons with disabilities | |
| NEW ROADS | | |
| Point Coupee Emergency Shelter Confidential Location 225-618-8300 | Single Women; Adult Couples; Family Groups | |
| OPELOUSAS | | |
| Opelousas Light House Mission 704 West South Street Opelousas, LA 70570 337-948-8865 or 337-948-8849 | Single men | 18 or over; Handicap Accessible |
| RAYNE | | |
| J&K Hope Center, Inc. 814 Holt Street Rayne, LA 70578 337-334-4799 | Single men | Dual diagnosed adult men who desire recovery and self- sufficiency |
| RUSTON | | |
| New Living Word Ministries P.O. Box 1793 1900 West Barnett Springs Rd. Ruston, LA 71270 318-255-0270 | | |
| SHREVEPORT | | |
| Mother Stewart House 1248 Sprague Street Shreveport, LA 71101 318-221-4857 | Single mothers with children; Adult couples; Single men and women; Single and two parent families | |
| Christ's Center Outreach for the Homeless 1445 Claiborne Avenue Shreveport, LA 71103 318-636-4203 | Men; Women; Families | |
| Providence House Homeless Family Shelter 814 Cotton Street Shreveport, LA 71101 318-221-7887 | Legally married couples and their children; men or women with children under 18 | Handicap Accessible; Intake hours 8 am to 5 pm |
| Shreveport Bossier Rescue Mission 2033 Texas Street Shreveport, LA 71103 318-227-2868 | Single homeless men | |

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| Salvation Army 1207 Cornwell Ave Shreveport, LA 71101 318-424-3200 Ext. 21 | Single Adults and Families | |
| Veterans Lighthouse Shreveport, LA 5 apt. / 3 bedroom / 3 vets per apt. 318-207-7821 | Veteran Men | Accepts Sex Offenders \$275 per month; no deposit; furnished; utilities included |
| Bossier City Apartments 32 one bedroom apartments Bossier City, LA 318-207-7821 | Veterans | Accepts Sex Offenders \$640 per month; \$100 deposit; furnished; utilities paid |
| SLIDELL | | |
| Christian Community; Miramon Center Confidential Location Slidell, LA 985-649-6233 | Single Men | Call Case manager to discuss shelter; single men must be employed and maintain employment for duration of stay; referred by minister or church |
| VINTON | | |
| City of Refuge 5899 Highway 3112 Vinton, LA 70668 337-589-4407 or 337-589-6404 | Veteran men and women; Fathers with children; Married couples | Handicap Accessible |
| WINNSBORO | | |
| Stepping Stones Addiction Recovery, Inc. 2260 Mauld Road Winnsboro, LA 71295 318-366-0241 | Men age 18-60 | Temporary shelter for men coming out of prison and vets |

VA GUARANTEED HOME LOAN

A VA guaranteed home loan can be used to buy a home, either existing or pre-construction, as a primary residence or refinance an existing loan.

Benefits of a VA guaranteed home loan:

- Equal opportunity for all qualified Veterans to obtain a VA loan
- Reusable
- No down payment (unless required by the lender or the purchase price is more than the reasonable value of the property)
- No mortgage insurance
- One time VA funding fee that can be included in the loan
- Veterans receiving VA disability compensation are exempt from the VA funding fee
- VA limits certain closing costs a Veteran can pay
- Can be assumed by qualified persons
- Minimum property requirements to ensure the property is safe, sanitary and sound
- VA staff dedicated to assisting Veterans who become delinquent on their loan

Who is eligible?

- Veterans who meet length of service requirements
- Service members on active duty who have served a minimum period
- Certain Reservists and National Guard members
- Certain surviving spouses of deceased Veterans
- Other groups who may be eligible. Contact VA eligibility at 1-888-768-2132.

Key Underwriting Criteria:

- No maximum debt ratio; however lender must provide compensating factors if debt ratio over 41%.
- No maximum loan amount; however VA does limit its guaranty; Veterans can borrow up to \$417,000 without a down payment in most of the country.
- Published residual income guidelines to ensure Veterans have the capacity to repay their obligations while accounting for all living expenses.
- No minimum credit score requirement; instead VA requires a lender to review the entire loan profile to make a lending decision.
- See the complete VA credit guidelines.

VA provides policy, guidelines and oversight of the program. Lenders provide financing for eligible Veterans. The guarantee allows Veterans to obtain a competitive loan without a down payment. Lenders need a Certificate of Eligibility (COE) to prove your entitlement. Most Veterans can obtain the COE online through eBenefits. Lenders also have the ability to request the COE on our behalf. VA encourages prospective buyers to talk to several lenders to find one that fits their needs, knows the VA loan program and offers competitive rates and terms.

ASSISTANCE WITH DELINQUENT HOME LOANS

The VA's goal is to ensure each Veteran receives every possible opportunity to retain their home or avoid foreclosure. VA urges all Veterans who are encountering problems making their mortgage payments to speak with their loan servicer as soon as possible to explore options to avoid foreclosure. Options to avoid foreclosure include:

- Repayment Plan – The borrower makes their regular installment each month plus part of the missed installments
- Special Forbearance – The servicer agrees not to initiate foreclosure to allow time for borrowers to repay the missed installments.
- Loan Modification – Provides the borrower a fresh start by adding the delinquency to the loan balance and establishing a new payment schedule.
- Additional time to arrange a private sale – The servicer agrees to delay foreclosure to allow a sale to close if the loan will be paid off.
- Short sale – When the servicer agrees to allow a borrower to sell his/her home for a lesser amount than what is currently required to pay off the loan.
- Deed-in-Lieu of Foreclosure – The borrower voluntarily agrees to deed the property to the servicer instead of going through the foreclosure process.

Service Members Relief Act – Veteran borrowers may be able to request relief pursuant to the Service members Civil Relief Act (SCRA). SCRA is intended to ease the economic and legal burdens on military personnel during their active service. In order to qualify for certain protections available under the Act, the borrower must request protection under the Act and the loan must have originated prior to the current period of active military service. SCRA may provide a lower interest rate or prevent foreclosure or eviction.

Veterans with VA Guaranteed Home Loans – Loan Servicers have the primary responsibility of resolving loan defaults, so it is imperative borrowers contact their loan servicer as quickly as possible. However, in cases where the servicer is unable to help the Veteran borrower, Loan Guarantee has Loan Technicians in nine Regional Loan Centers who take an active role in interceding with the servicer to explore all options to avoid foreclosure.

Veterans with Non-VA Guaranteed Home Loans – For a Veteran or Service Member with a conventional or sub-prime loan, VA does not have authority to intervene on the borrower's behalf. It is imperative borrowers contact their loan servicer as quickly as possible.

SECTION 3: VA BENEFITS

Disability Compensation

Disability Compensation is a benefit paid to a Veteran because of injuries or diseases that happened while on active duty or made worse by active military service. It is also paid to certain Veterans disabled from VA health care. The benefits are tax free. You may be eligible if you have a service –related disability and you were discharged under other than dishonorable conditions.

Individual Unemployability (IU)

IU is a part of VA’s disability compensation program that allows VA to pay certain Veterans compensation at the 100% rate even though VA has not rated their service-connected disabilities at the 100% level. A Veteran must be unable to maintain substantially gainful employment as a result of his/her service-connected disabilities. A Veteran must have one service-connected disability ratable at 60% or more **OR** two or more service-connected disabilities, at least one disability ratable at 40% or more with a combined rating of 70% or more. **No total disability rating based on un-employability, may be assigned to an incarcerated veteran.**

Special Monthly Compensation (SMC):

VA can pay additional compensation to a Veteran who, as a result of military service, incurred the loss or loss of use of specific organs or extremities. Loss, or loss of use, is described as either an amputation or, having no effective remaining function of an extremity or organ. If a Veteran is service-connected at the 100% rate and is housebound, bedridden, or is helpless as to need the aid and attendance of another person, then payment of additional SMC can be considered. The amount of SMC will vary depending on the level of disability.

Dependent Parent Benefit:

A Veteran whose parent(s) are dependent upon him/her for financial support may be paid additional benefits. Dependency of a parent is based on need. Both the parental relationship and financial dependency of the parent must be established to qualify for this benefit. The Veteran must be in receipt of compensation with a combined evaluation of at least 30% **OR** the Veteran is in receipt of VA educational benefits based on enrollment of ½ time or more. The term “dependent parent” means that either the parent’s income and net worth meet certain limits as defined by law **OR** a parent with a substantial income or assets has correspondingly high expenses.

Incarceration and Disability Compensation (Service Connected Disability):

VA disability compensation payments are reduced if a Veteran is convicted of a felony and imprisoned for more than 60 days. Veterans rated 20 percent or more are limited to the 10 % disability rate. For a Veteran whose disability rating is 10%, the payment is reduced by one-half.

Once a Veteran is released from prison, compensation payments may be reinstated based upon the severity of the service connected disability (ies) at that time. Payments are not reduced for recipients participating in work release programs, residing in halfway houses or under community control. The amount of any increased compensation awarded to an incarcerated Veteran that results from other than a statutory rate increase may be subject to reduction due to incarceration. Compensation benefits are not reduced if imprisoned for a misdemeanor. **Failure to notify VA of a Veteran's incarceration could result in the loss of all financial benefits until the overpayment is recovered.**

Non-Service Connected Pension:

Pension is a needs-based benefit paid to a wartime Veteran and his/her survivor(s). A Veteran may generally be eligible if he/she:

- Was discharged from service under other than dishonorable conditions, **AND**
- Served 90 days or more of active military, naval or air service with at least one day during a period of war, **AND**
- His/her countable income is below the maximum annual pension rate, **AND**
- Meets the net worth limitations, **AND**
- Is age 65 or older, **OR** is shown by evidence to have a permanent and total non-service connected disability, **OR** is a patient in a nursing home, **OR** is receiving Social Security disability benefits.

*Veterans who entered active duty after September 7, 1980 must also have served at least 24 months of active duty service. If the total length of service is less than 24 months, the Veteran must have completed his/her entire tour of active duty.

Aid and Attendance (A&A) is an increased monthly pension amount paid to a Veteran or surviving spouse. You may be eligible if:

- You are eligible for basic pension benefits **AND**
- You require the aid of another person in order to perform activities of daily living such as bathing, feeding, dressing, toileting, adjusting prosthetic devices or protecting yourself from the hazards of your daily environment **OR**
- You are bedridden, in that your disability (ies) require that you remain in bed apart from any prescribed course of convalescence or treatment, **OR**
- You are a patient in a nursing home due to mental or physical incapacity, **OR**
- You have corrected visual acuity of 5/200 or less, in both eyes, or concentric contraction of the visual field to 5 degrees or less.

Housebound is an increased monthly pension paid to a Veteran or surviving spouse who is substantially confined to home because of the permanent disability. You may be eligible if:

- You are eligible for basic pension benefits **AND**
- You have a single permanent disability evaluated as 100% disabling **AND** due to the disability (ies) you are permanently and substantially confined to your immediate premises, **OR**
- You have a single permanent disability evaluated as 100% disabling **AND** another disability (ies), independently evaluated as 60% or more disabling.

Pension – Eligible War Time Periods

- World War I (April 6, 1917 – November 11, 1918)
- World War II (December 7, 1941 – December 31, 1946)
- Korean Conflict (June 27, 1950 – January 31, 1956)
- Vietnam Era (February 28, 1961 – May 7, 1975 for Veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam during that period; otherwise August 5, 1964 – May 7, 1975)
- Gulf War (August 2, 1990 – through a future date to be set by law or Presidential Proclamation)

Incarceration and Non-Service Connected Pension:

Veterans in receipt of VA pension will have payments terminated effective the 61st day after imprisonment in a Federal, State or local penal institution for conviction of a felony or misdemeanor. Payments may be resumed upon release from prison if the Veteran meets VA eligibility requirements. **Failure to notify VA of a Veteran's incarceration could result in the loss of all financial benefits until the overpayment is recovered.**

Apportionment to Dependents:

All or part of the compensation not paid to an incarcerated Veteran may be apportioned to the Veteran's spouse, child or children, and dependent parents on the basis of individual need. In determining individual need, consideration shall be given to such factors as the claimant's income and living expenses, the amount of compensation available to be apportioned, the needs and living expenses of the claimants as well as any special needs, if any, of all claimants.

- VA will inform a Veteran whose benefits are subject to reduction of the right of the Veteran's dependents to an apportionment while the Veteran is incarcerated, and the conditions under which payments to the Veteran may be resumed upon release from incarceration.
- VA will also notify the dependents of their right to an apportionment if the VA is aware of their existence and can obtain their address.
- An apportionment of an incarcerated Veteran's VA benefits is not granted automatically to the Veteran's dependents. The dependent(s) must file a claim for an apportionment.
- No apportionment may be made to or on behalf of any person who is incarcerated in a Federal, State, or local penal institution for conviction of a felony.

Overpayments:

If you have received an overpayment, you may request a repayment plan after your release with Debt Management Services. The contact information is:

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Debt Management Center
P.O. Box 11930
St. Paul, MN 55111
Toll Free: 1-800-827-0648
International: 1-612-713-6415
FAX: 1-612-970-5688

Most VBA decisions, including those on apportionment, can be appealed to the Board of Veterans Appeals and, if need be, to the Court of Appeal for Veterans Affairs.

Re-starting Benefits at Release:

It is important that each disabled veteran receiving compensation or pension payments promptly notify the VA Regional Office upon release. Regular full benefit payments should begin upon release, providing the VA is notified of the veteran's release, including placement within a community treatment center or halfway house in the community, within one year of release. Your local VA Regional Office (VARO) needs formal notification from the prison of your release in order to re-start benefits. Form 21-4193, Notice to Department of Veterans Affairs of Veteran of Beneficiary Incarcerated in Penal Institution should be completed 30 days before release, signed by a prison official and submitted to Veterans Benefits Administration. The sooner that document is provided to your local VA Regional Office, the sooner they can begin to process your request.

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

The Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs (LDVA) maintains a claims assistance office at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Regional Office in New Orleans as well as parish service offices (PSO) in all 64 parishes in the state. LDVA staff advise and assist Louisiana Veterans and their dependents in filing and pursuing claims with the federal VA. Services are free and may be obtained by visiting any PSO.

- To assist in submitting a claim for VA benefits, PSOs will help to identify what evidence is needed to have the best possible chance of having a claim approved.
- LDVA will monitor the claim as it progresses through the development process and intercede if problems with a claim should arise. LDVA staff will explain and clarify VA procedures that apply to the claim.

- If a claim is denied by the VA and the veteran disagrees with the VA's decision, LDVA's, PSOs and Claims Officers will help through the appeal process. For example, LDVA can assist in preparing a proper notice of disagreement, representing the veteran at a personal hearing, etc. LDVA has expertise and experience in helping veterans and family members in obtaining a variety of federal VA benefits and services including disability compensation, non-service connected pension, vocational rehabilitation, health care benefits, education benefits, burial benefits and VA guaranteed home loans.

LOUISIANA STATE VETERAN SERVICE OFFICES

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| Acadia 601 N. Parkeron Ave. Crowley, LA 70526 337-788-7539 | Allen 105 N. 5 th Street Oberlin, LA 70655 337-639-4370 | Ascension Courthouse Gonzales 225-644-7475 225-474-2001 |
| Assumption Courthouse Annex Napoleonville, LA 70390 985-369-6335 | Avoyelles 312 N. Main Street Marksville, LA 713351 318-253-9437 | Beauregard War Memorial Civic Ctr 250 West 7 th Street DeRidder, LA 70634 337-463-7305 |
| Bienville Courthouse, Room 122 Arcadia, LA 71001 318-263-7419 | Bossier 2292 Barksdale Blvd. Bossier City, LA 71112 318-741-8391 | Caddo 1237 Murphy Street Shreveport, LA 71101 318-676-7540 |
| Calcasieu Courthouse, Ground Floor Lake Charles, LA 70601 337-491-2309 | Caldwell Courthouse Columbia, LA 71418 318-649-2552 | Cameron Courthouse, Ground Floor Lake Charles, LA 70601 337-491-2309 |
| Catahoula 108 Sicily Street Harrisonburg, LA 71340 318-744-5601 | Claiborne 507 West Main Homer, LA 71040 318-927-3077 | Concordia 109 Doty Road Ferriday, LA 71334 318-757-4952 |
| Desoto Courthouse Mansfield, LA 71052 318-872-4325 | East Baton Rouge 4560 North Blvd. Suite 116 Baton Rouge, LA 70806 225-925-7268 | East Carrol Old Courthouse Building Lake Providence, LA 71254 318-559-2353 |
| East Feliciana 4739 Hwy 10 Jackson, LA 70748 225-634-5265 | Evangeline 205 Court Street Ste. D Ville Platte, LA 70586 337-363-3862 | Franklin Courthouse, First Floor Winnsboro, LA 71295 318-435-2141 |
| Grant 730 Washington Street Alexandria, LA 71301 318-487-5743 | Iberia 121 West Pershing Street New Iberia, LA 70560 337-373-0001 | Iberville Parish Ag. Bldg. Room 10 Plaquemine, LA 70764 225-687-2714 |

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| <p>Jackson 322 6th Street Jonesboro, LA 71251 318-259-2100</p> | <p>Jefferson (East) 6640 Riverside Dr. Ste. 210 Metairie, LA 70003 504-838-4380</p> | <p>Jefferson (West) 5001 West Bank Exp. Marrero, LA 70072 504-349-5937</p> |
| <p>Jefferson Davis Eastside Parish Courthouse Jennings, LA 70546 337-824-7301</p> | <p>Lafayette War Memorial Building Lafayette, LA 70501 337-262-5628</p> | <p>LaFourche 303 West Third Street Thibodaux, LA 71342 985-447-0968</p> |
| <p>LaSalle Courthouse, Room 21 Jena, LA 70501 318-992-2259</p> | <p>Lincoln 307 Homer St. 2nd Floor Ruston, LA 71270 318-251-4142</p> | <p>Livingston 8393 Florida Blvd. Denham Springs, LA 70726 225-664-2950</p> |
| <p>Madison 402 E. Green Street Tallulah, LA 71282 318-574-3870</p> | <p>Morehouse N. Franklin & E. Pine St. Bastrop, LA 71220 318-283-0841</p> | <p>Natchitoches 203 St. Denis St. Room 117 Natchitoches, LA 71457 318-357-3106</p> |
| <p>Orleans 6640 Riverside Drive Suite 210 Metairie, LA 70003 504-838-4380</p> | <p>Ouachita 704 Cypress Street West Monroe, LA 71291 318-362-5137</p> | <p>Plaquemines 5001 West Bank Exp. Marrero, LA 70072 504-349-5937</p> |
| <p>Pointe Coupee 206 Court Street New Roads, LA 70760 225-638-5535</p> | <p>Rapides 730 Washington Street Alexandria, LA 71301 318-487-5743</p> | <p>Red River Courthouse Annex 210 Red Oak Road Coushatta, LA 71019 318-932-4911</p> |
| <p>Richland Courthouse Basement Rayville, LA 71269 318-728-2472</p> | <p>Sabine Courthouse, 1st floor Many, LA 71449 318-256-4131</p> | <p>St. Bernard 6640 Riverside Dr. Suite 210 Metairie, LA 70003 504-838-4380</p> |
| <p>St. Charles Courthouse Hahnville, LA 70057 985-783-2221</p> | <p>St. Helena Courthouse Square Greensburg, LA 70441 225-222-6202</p> | <p>St. James 2430 Louisiana Avenue Lutcher, LA 70071 225-869-3643</p> |
| <p>St. John 4080 W. Airline Hwy. Reserve, LA 70084 985-479-4080</p> | <p>St. Landry 527 E. Prudhomme St. Ste 4 Opelousas, LA 70570 337-948-0238</p> | <p>St. Martin 101 Beard Street Breaux Bridge, LA 70517 337-332-8316</p> |
| <p>St. Mary Courthouse Room 1 Franklin, LA 70538 337-828-5047</p> | <p>St. Tammany (East) 61134 N. Military Slidell, LA 70461 985-645-3500</p> | <p>St. Tammany (West) Old Courthouse Covington, LA 70433 985-893-6201</p> |
| <p>Tangipahoa 411 W. Coleman A Hammond, LA 70401 985-542-3498</p> | <p>Tensas Police Jury Building St. Joseph, LA 71366 318-766-3542</p> | <p>Terrebonne Parish Government Towers Houma, LA 70360 985-857-3626</p> |

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| Union 303 East Water Street Office #106 Farmerville, LA 71241 318-368-3271 | Vermillion 407 Charity Street Abbeville, LA 70510 337-893-2072 | Vernon Courthouse Square, NE Corner Leesville, LA 71446 337-238-6401 |
| Washington City Hall Building Bogalusa, LA 70429 985-732-6607 | Webster 119 Pine Street Minden, LA 71055 318-371-3045 | West Baton Rouge Courthouse Annex Port Allen, LA 70767 225-342-6686 |
| West Carroll 706 East Main Oak Grove, LA 71263 318-428-2671 | West Feliciana 4739 Highway 10 Jackson, LA 70748 225-634-5265 | Winn Courthouse Winnfield, LA 71483 318-628-4584 |
| VA Regional Office 1250 Poydras Street, Suite 200 New Orleans, LA 70113 1-800-827-1000 | | |

Seeking Benefits On Your Own:

Although we encourage you to seek the aid of a service representative, you may choose to apply for VA benefits on your own. Write your HCRV Specialist, the local VA Regional Office or find the forms online at: www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms1.htm. You can also apply for certain benefits online at: <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp>. Be sure you use a return address where mail will get to you as quickly as possible. Make photocopies of all forms for your records before sending your packet to the VARO nearest you.

- **VA Form 21-526** - Application for Compensation or Pension- must be filed to apply for compensation or pension. Mail your DD-214 and the following forms to the VARO nearest your release destination 30 to 45 days before your release.
- **VA Form 21-4138** - Statement in Support of Claim - lets you explain why you deserve the benefits you are asking for because of your disability or disorder. It is best to have an experienced service representative help you complete the form.
- **VA Form 21-4142** - Authorization for Release of Information - If you have received medical or mental health care, that may be relevant to your claim, from anyone other than a VA Medical Facility, you need to fill out a VAF 21-4142 giving permission for release of medical records to the VA.
- **VA Form 10-10EZ** - Enrollment for Medical Benefits - is used by the VA to determine if you can receive medical benefits. Complete the form and bring it with you to the VA medical facility where you will seek evaluation for treatment.
- **VA Form 10-10EZR** – To update your personal, insurance or financial information after you are enrolled and is used by the VA to determine your eligibility for medical benefits.

- **VA Form 28-1900** - Vocational Rehabilitation for Disabled Veterans - is needed to apply for the vocational rehabilitation program to help veterans who were disabled during their service reach maximum independence in daily living, to learn the skills needed to get a job, and to find and keep a job. Send Form 28-1900 to the VARO in your area 10 to 15 days before your release.
- **VA Form 70-3288** - Request for and Consent to Release of Information from Claimant's Records - is used to get records relevant to your claim from VA facilities (regional offices, medical centers, outpatient clinics, and vet centers). Request a fee waiver under section 38 C.F.R. Sec.1.526 (h), which requires the VARO to provide a veteran with one set of his or her records free of charge.
- **VA Form 22-1990** – Application for Education Benefits – is used to apply for educational assistance under the following benefit programs: Post 9/11 GI Bill; Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB); Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR); Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP); Post-Vietnam Era Veterans' Educational Assistance Program (VEAP).
- **SF 180** – Request Pertaining to Military Records – is used to request copies of your DD214 or equivalent, all documents in your Official Military Personnel File, and Military Medical Records including Service Treatment Records, and Health and Dental Records.
- **VA Form 21-8940** – Veteran's Application for Increased Compensation Based on Unemployability. This cannot be granted to an Incarcerated Veteran.
- **VA Form 21-2680** – Examination for Housebound or Permanent Need for Regular Aid and Attendance. You should also provide copies of any evidence that would help establish that you need A&A or are Housebound.
- **VA Form 21-509** – Statement of Dependency of Parents.
- **VA Form 21-0788** – Apportionment of Beneficiary's Award. All or part of a Veteran's disability award may be apportioned (paid) to the Veteran's spouse, child or dependent parent.

SECTION 4: SOCIAL SECURITY
WHAT PRISONERS NEED TO KNOW

As part of the Federal Interagency Reentry Council, the Social Security Administration has partnered with other federal agencies to provide information about available services. We share the common goal to see you find gainful employment and receive benefits which you may be eligible for such as health care, food, and shelter.

SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

Individuals released from incarceration may be eligible for **Social Security retirement, survivors, or disability benefits** if you have worked or paid into Social Security enough years or **Supplemental Security Income benefits** if you are 65 or older, or are blind, or have a disability and have little or no income and resources.

SOCIAL SECURITY'S DEFINITION OF DISABILITY

WE CONSIDER YOU DISABLED UNDER SOCIAL SECURITY RULES IF:

- You cannot do work that you did before;
- We decide that you cannot adjust to other work because of your medical condition(s); and
- Your disability has lasted or is expected to last for at least one year or to result in death.

SSA does not pay partial or short-term disability benefits.

If you meet the above requirements, Social Security benefits also may pay:

- Your child who is under age 18, or severely disabled before age 22, or
- Your wife who is age 62 or older, or is caring for your child who is under age 16 or severely disabled before age 22.

If you believe you qualify, call our toll-free telephone number, **1-800-772-1213** to schedule an appointment. If you are deaf or hard of hearing, call TTY **1-800-325-0778**.

Does Social Security pay benefits to prisoners?

We pay benefits under both the Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs. Both of these programs prohibit payments to most prisoners.

Social Security benefits are suspended if an otherwise eligible person is confined in a jail, prison, or other penal institution for more than 30 continuous days due to conviction of a crime.

We cannot pay benefits to someone who, by court order, is confined in an institution at public expense in connection with a criminal case if the court finds that the person is: guilty, but insane; not guilty of such an offense by reason of insanity or similar factors (such as a mental disease); or incompetent to stand trial for such an alleged offense.

Also, we cannot pay benefits to someone who, immediately upon completion of a prison sentence for conviction of a criminal offense (an element of which is sexual activity), is confined by court order in an institution at public expense. The confinement must be based on a court finding that the individual is a sexually dangerous person or sexual predator (or a similar finding.) However, if a person is not confined in prison or other similar place, benefits may be paid to an eligible individual.

If I am arrested on a criminal charge, or a parole, or probation violation, will I still get my monthly Social Security payments?

We generally do not pay Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients during confinement for a crime in jail, prison or certain other public institutions.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments: If you get SSI, we will stop your payments after you are imprisoned for a month. If you were convicted in March to serve at least a month-long sentence, you will not get an April payment. We can reinstate your payments the month you get out. However, if you are jailed 12 consecutive months or longer, you will have to file a new application and again be approved for SSI by Social Security.

Social Security benefits: If you are receiving Social Security retirement or disability, we will stop your benefits if you are institutionalized for more than 30 continuous days after a crime conviction. Although you cannot receive monthly Social Security benefits while you are confined, benefits to your dependent spouse or children will continue as long as they remain eligible.

If you, for example, are convicted in March and jailed more than 30 days, you will not be eligible for March benefit. Your payments will stop with your April payment.

We can reinstate your benefits starting with the month you are released. To restart your payments, visit your local Social Security office with proof of your release.

Why does Social Security need to know that I am in jail?

When you initially applied for Social Security benefits, either Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or for retirement, disability, or survivors (RSDI, also known as Title II) benefits, Social Security advised you about certain changes that could affect your ability to continue to get payments. For SSI benefits, the law states that you cannot live in a public institution (for example, a jail, prison, penal facility, etc.) for a full calendar month or more, and continue to get your SSI benefits. For Title II benefits, the law states that if you commit a crime and a court convicts you, and you serve more than 30 continuous days in jail following the conviction, you cannot get your Title II benefits.

It is important that you tell Social Security of any of these changes as soon as possible to avoid getting money that you are not due. You can contact Social Security at any time at www.socialsecurity.gov/reach.htm to report any changes that may affect your Social Security payments.

How a conviction affects your Social Security benefits?

By law, you cannot get payments for any month (including any part of the month) in which you have been convicted and confined in a correctional facility for more than 30 consecutive days.

For example, if you were convicted and confined on March 29, 2012 and you remained in jail until May 2, 2012, you would not get benefits for the months of March, April, or May because you were in jail for 35 consecutive days.

My checks stopped while I was incarcerated. How do I restart my benefits?

If the prison has a prerelease agreement with the Social Security Administration, you or the prison's representative may initiate contact with Social Security 90 days before your scheduled release date.

If the prison does not have a prerelease agreement with Social Security, contact us at **1-800-772-1213** Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. to schedule an appointment to apply for benefits:

- Inform Social Security you were released from prison. Our representative will then provide further instructions.
- As proof of your release, bring your official prison release documents to your appointment.

Release from prison does not automatically make you eligible for benefits. However, depending on the circumstances of your case, we may be able to have your checks started effective with the month after the month of your release.

Will my benefits start again if the court reverses my conviction?

If you are entitled to Retirement, Survivors or Disability Insurance benefits, we can restart your benefits if the correctional institution releases you and the court reverses all charges of your conviction. The court must also agree not to prosecute you again on the same charges. If the court retries you on the same charges, it must find you not guilty after your new trial.

If you are eligible for Supplement Security Income payments and you live in a public institution (jail, prison, detention center, etc.) over a calendar month, we cannot start your benefits until the institution releases you.

My husband is presently incarcerated and does not receive Social Security benefits. Are my son and I eligible for any benefits while he is in jail?

The answer depends on the payment status before your husband's incarceration. If your husband was not receiving Social Security benefits before his incarceration, we cannot pay benefits to you or your son during his incarceration.

If you and your son were receiving Social Security benefits on your husband's record before his incarceration, benefits to you and your son would continue during his incarceration.

What happens to my Medicare when my checks stop because I go to jail?

Your Hospital Insurance (Part A) coverage will continue. To keep your medical insurance (Part B) coverage, you must pay the monthly premiums or your coverage will end.

If your coverage ends while you are in jail because you did not pay your Medicare premiums, you will be able to enroll during the general enrollment period (January through March of each year). If you enroll during a general enrollment period, your insurance coverage will start in July

in the year in which you enroll. You will be responsible for any unpaid past-due premiums and your ongoing premium may be higher.

I was transferred from prison to a halfway house that is under the control of my state's Department of Corrections. Can I have my benefits started again since I am no longer in prison?

No. Social Security will not pay benefits while you reside in any facility under the authority of your state's Department of Corrections. Even though you are no longer in prison, you are still under the control and custody of your state's Department of Corrections until you complete your court-ordered sentence and you are officially released, or until the Department of Corrections places you on parole.

Can I have my benefits started again if I am on home monitoring and must wear a monitoring ankle bracelet at all times?

Your benefits can start again once you contact your local Social Security office to report your release from a correctional institution and the change to ankle bracelet monitoring.

SECTION 5: EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION

FINDING AND KEEPING A JOB

Finding a job may be hard and can seem overwhelming, but it is possible and very important! When released you may find that you are completely starting over. You should ask for job counseling and training while incarcerated so you are prepared to work when released. **Don't wait** until you get out to start thinking about what you will do. **Start planning now!**

Compensated Work Therapy Program (CWT)- provides a high quality work experience both in transitional work and competitive employment for eligible veterans who have identified mental illness and/or substance use disorders. **Transitional Work Experience**- provides the veteran with compensated work adjustment within the VA Medical Center and the community. The program is a therapeutic, temporary pre-competitive employment program either fulltime or part-time up to 5-6 months. **Supported Employment**- is competitive employment either full or part-time within the community for a private employer.

The VA also has Employment Specialist to assist Veterans in finding gainful employment. To find out more information about these programs, call your local VA Medical Center after release. You may also access these through referral from your VA primary care team.

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services (VR&E) – This program is authorized by Congress under Title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 31. It is sometimes referred to as the Chapter 31 program. The VR&E program assists Veterans with service-connected disabilities to prepare for, find and keep suitable jobs. For Veterans with service-connected disabilities so severe they cannot immediately consider work, VR&E offers services to improve their ability to live as independently as possible. Veterans are eligible if they have received an honorable or other than dishonorable discharge and have a VA service-connected disability rating of 10% with a serious employment handicap or 20% or more with an employment handicap. The law generally provides for a 12-year basic period of eligibility in which services may be used. The 12-year period begins on the latter of these dates: 1) Date of Separation from active military duty or 2) Date the Veteran was first notified of a service-connected disability rating.

Louisiana Workforce Commission – Louisiana Business and Career Solutions Centers statewide offer veterans all the job-finding resources, technology and personal services needed. Visit them at www.laworks.net after your release to find the office nearest you.

Goodwill Industries - Goodwill Industries of North Louisiana, Inc. is one of the leading non-profit providers of vocational employment and training services in North Louisiana. Goodwill serves individuals with a wide range of disadvantages and disabilities, from criminal background, lack of education, welfare recipients, homeless, etc. Each participant is offered job readiness training, life skills training, job placement and retention assistance. We have all the resources you need to find the right job and succeed in your career. As a veteran we understand your loyalty and dedication and are capable of putting you back on the road to success!

Work Opportunity Tax Credit- The main objective of The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is to enable certified employees to gradually move from economic dependency to self-sufficiency as they earn a steady income and become contributing tax payers. At the same time, participating employers are compensated by being able to reduce their federal income tax liability. For each new ex-felon hired, the credit is 25% of qualified first year wages for those employed at least 120 hours, or \$1500; and 40% for those employed 400 hours or more, or \$2400.

Employers can hire individuals from the following 9 target groups which have traditionally faced significant barriers to employment:

- Qualified TANF recipients
- Qualified Veterans
- Qualified Ex-Felons
- Qualified Designated Community Residents
- Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Referrals
- Qualified Summer Youth
- Qualified SNAP Recipients
- Qualified SSI Recipients
- Qualified Long-Term Family Assistance Recipients

Louisiana State Bonding Program—bonding is a unique and innovative tool for marketing an applicant to an employer. As an employer incentive, it conveys a businesslike approach. The employer gets the worker's skills, abilities and knowledge without taking risk of potential employee dishonesty. There are **no forms** or other papers for the employer to sign, and **no processing** to delay matters – **the insurance can be put into effect instantly**. The **bond insurance can apply to any job** and covers any employee dishonesty that occurs on or away from the employer's work facility. Full or part-time employees' paid wages (with federal taxes automatically deducted from pay) can be bonded; these Fidelity Bonds cannot cover self-employment.

Vocational Rehabilitation - The State of Louisiana has a **Vocational Rehabilitation** program that helps people with disabilities find and keep jobs. Apply for these services immediately after your release. Look in the phone book blue pages under "Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)," then "Vocational Rehabilitation," or search the internet for "Vocational Rehabilitation" in your state.

Education Benefits:

Beneficiaries incarcerated for other than a felony can receive full monthly benefits, if otherwise entitled. Convicted felons residing in halfway houses or participating in work release programs also can receive full monthly benefits.

Claimants incarcerated for a felony conviction can be paid only the costs of tuition, fees, and necessary books, equipment, or supplies. VA cannot make payments for tuition, fees, books, equipment or supplies if another Federal, State or local program pays these costs in full.

If another government program pays only a part of the cost of tuition, fees, books, equipment or supplies, VA can authorize the incarcerated claimant payment for the remaining part of the costs.

Contact the education department or case manager at your correctional facility regarding what educational benefits they provide or have them phone the nearest VA and ask for the Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist, contact your VA Regional Office (VARO) at 1-800-827-1000 or go to www.vba.va.gov/VBA.

Montgomery GI Bill – You may be an eligible Veteran if you:

- Entered active duty for the first time after June 30, 1985.
- Received a high school diploma or equivalent before the end of your first obligated period of service.
- Received an **HONORABLE** discharge. General or Under Honorable Conditions makes you ineligible for education benefits. To be eligible with an early discharge, your separation reason must meet certain requirements.
- Continuously serviced for three years **OR** two years if that is what you first enlisted for **OR** two years if you have an obligation to serve four years in the Selected Reserve **AND** entered Selected Reserve within a year of leaving active duty.

The Montgomery GI Bill may provide assistance for:

- College, Business, Technical or Vocational School
- On-the-job Training and Apprenticeship Programs
- Remedial, Deficiency and Refresher Training (In some cases)
- The cost of tests for licenses or certifications needed to get, keep or advance in a job
- Tuition Assistance
- Correspondence Courses
- Flight Training (In some cases)
- National Tests

Post-911 GI Bill – Individuals who serve at least 90 days of aggregate service after September 10, 2001 are eligible. To be eligible for 100% of the benefit, an individual must have served an aggregate of 36 months of active duty service, or have been discharged for a service-connected disability after 30 days of continuous service after September 10, 2001. For those who served fewer than 36 months, the percentage of benefit ranges from 40% to 90%. Veterans must have an **HONORABLE** discharge to be eligible. Approved training and education include:

- Graduate and Undergraduate degrees
- Vocational/Technical training
- On-the-job Training
- Flight Training
- Correspondence Training
- Licensing and National Testing Programs
- Entrepreneurship training and Tutorial Assistance

Post-Vietnam Veterans' Educational Assistance Program (VEAP) – VEAP is an education benefit for Veterans who paid into VEAP while they were in the service. Eligible Veterans may be entitled to as much as 36 months of training. Eligibility usually ends 10 years after getting out of the service, but the time limit can be longer in certain cases. Eligible Veterans may pursue any of the following types of training:

- College or University Programs
- Business, Technical or Vocational Training
- On-the-job and Apprenticeship Training
- Remedial, Deficiency and Refresher Training (in some cases)
- National Tests
- Correspondence Courses
- Flight Training (in some cases)
- High School Diploma or Equivalent
- The cost of tests for licenses or certifications needed to get, keep or advance a job

To establish eligibility to VEAP, you must have:

- First entered active duty after December 31, 1976 and before July 1, 1985 **AND**
- Contributed to VEAP before April 1, 1987 **AND**
- Completed your first period of service **AND**
- Been discharged under conditions other than dishonorable

SECTION 6: INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE (IRS)

Benefits:

- Refunds – you have up to three years to file a claim for a refund.
- Tax Credits – even if you don't make enough money to pay taxes, you might still qualify for a refund.
- Proof of Income – filing your tax return is important if you want to rent a dwelling or apply for a loan.
- Social Security – to qualify for benefits, Social Security needs a record of your work history
- Peace of Mind - file your taxes and have one less thing to worry about.

Free Help Filing Your Return:

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) – IRS-certified volunteers receive training to prepare basic tax returns in communities across the country. To locate a VITA site near you, go to www.irs.gov and search: VITA, or call 1-800-906-9887

Tax-Aide - Trained and certified AARP Tax-Aide volunteers help people of low-to-middle income, with special attention to those ages 60 and older. To locate the nearest AARP Tax-Aide site, call 1-888-227-7669 or use the Tax-Aide Locator at www.aarp.org

Free File – It's fast, safe and free. Let Free File do the hard work for you with brand-name software or online Fillable Forms. You can prepare and e-file your federal return for free. Participating software companies make their products available through the IRS. Some also support state tax returns. Go to www.irs.gov/freefile to get started.

What to do if You Owe Taxes:

You should file all tax returns that are due, regardless of whether or not you can pay in full with your return. Depending on your circumstances, you may qualify for a payment plan. In many cases, filing late can result in avoidable penalties, costing you more money. If you haven't filed, go to www.irs.gov for more information about payment options or to set up a payment arrangement. You can also visit your nearest Taxpayer Assistance Center or call the IRS toll-free at 1-800-829-1040.

Taxpayer Advocate Service (TAS):

Your voice at the IRS. Call TAS if you're having economic problems, if you need help resolving an IRS problem, or you believe an IRS system or procedure isn't working as it should. Call toll-free at 1-877-777-4778 or go to www.TaxpayerAdvocate.irs.gov

Prior Year Tax Returns, W-2, or 1099:

To get copies of prior year tax returns, or to get copies of Forms W-2 or 1099 series to assist you in filing a prior year return, call 1-800-829-1040. For additional questions about your account or responsibilities call 1-800-829-1040.

Helpful Non- IRS Information:

To find out if your refund will be offset due to out-standing debts, such as defaulted student loans or past-due child support contact the Treasury Offset Program Call Center: 1-800-304-3107. Find out which government benefits you may be eligible to receive: www.benefits.gov

SECTION 7: PRO BONO LEGAL SERVICES

- Acadiana Legal Services Corporation (Lafayette Headquarters)
P.O. Box 4823 Lafayette, LA 70502-4823
Phone: 337-237-4320
Needs: Family & Juvenile; Housing; Life Planning; Public Benefits; Veterans
- Baton Rouge Bar Foundation Pro Bono Project
541 Main Street Baton Rouge, LA 70802
Phone: 225-344-4803 <http://brba.org>
Needs: Consumer; Debt/Credit/Bankruptcy; Family & Juvenile; Life Planning; Public Benefits; Veterans
- Capital Area Legal Services Corporation
200 3rd Street Baton Rouge, LA 70801-1304
Phone: 225-387-5173 <http://www.calscla.org>
Needs: Civil Rights; Consumer; Debt/Credit/Bankruptcy; Disability; Education; Elder Law; Employment; Family & Juvenile; Health; HIV/AIDS; Homeless; Housing; Life Planning; Prisoners; Public Benefits; Veterans
- Central Louisiana Pro Bono Project, Inc.
P.O. Box 1324 Suite 112 Alexandria, LA 71309-1324
Phone: 318-449-9778
Needs: Civil Rights; Community Development; Consumer; Debt/Credit/Bankruptcy; Education; Employment; Family & Juvenile; Homeless; Housing; Life Planning; Nonprofit Organizations; Prisoners; Public Benefits; Veterans
- Lafayette Parish Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers
P.O. Box 2194 505 Lafayette, LA 70502
Phone: 337-237-4700 <http://www.lafayettebar.org>
Needs: Consumer; Elder Law; Family & Juvenile; Housing; Life Planning; Public Benefits; Veterans
- Legal Services of North Louisiana
P.O. Box 1189 Natchitoches, LA 71458-1189
Phone: 318-352-7220
Needs: Civil Rights; Consumer; Debt/Credit/Bankruptcy; Disability; Education; Elder Law; Employment; Family & Juvenile; Health; Homeless; Housing; Life Planning; Prisoners; Public Benefits; Veterans

- North Louisiana Legal Assistance Corporation Volunteer Lawyers
 200 Washington Street Monroe, LA 71201-6754
 Phone: 318-325-3558
 Needs: Civil Rights; Consumer; Debt/Credit/Bankruptcy; Elder Law; Employment;
 Family & Juvenile; Homeless; Housing; Life Planning; Prisoners; Public Benefits;
 Veterans
- Northwest Louisiana Legal Services, Inc.
 720 Travis Street Shreveport, LA 71101-2948
 Phone: 318-222-7186
 Needs: Civil Rights; Consumer; Debt/Credit/Bankruptcy; Disability; Education;
 Employment; Family & Juvenile; Health; Homeless; Housing; Life Planning; Prisoners;
 Public Benefits; Veterans
- South Louisiana Legal Services
 1010 Common Suite 1400A New Orleans, LA 70112
 Phone: 504-529-1000 <http://www.nolac.org>
 Needs: Civil Rights; Community Development; Consumer; Debt/Credit/Bankruptcy;
 Disability; Education; Employment; Family & Juvenile; Health; Homeless; Housing; Life
 Planning; Nonprofit Organizations; Prisoners; Public Benefits; Veterans
- Southeast Louisiana Legal Services
 1200 Derek Drive Suite 100 Hammond, LA 70403
 Phone: 985-345-2130
 Needs: Civil Rights; Community Development; Debt/Credit/Bankruptcy; Disability;
 Education; Employment; Family & Juvenile; Health; Homeless; Housing; Life Planning;
 Nonprofit Organizations; Prisoners; Public Benefits; Veterans
- The Pro Bono Project
 615 Baronne Street Suite 201 New Orleans, LA 70113
 Phone: 504-581-4043 <http://www.probono-no.org>
 Needs: Community Development; Consumer; Debt/Credit/Bankruptcy; Disability; Elder
 Law; Employment; Family & Juvenile; Health; Housing; Life Planning; Nonprofit
 Organizations; Public Benefits; Veterans

SECTION 8: REENTRY MYTH BUSTERS!

Reentry MythBusters are a first product of the Federal Interagency Reentry Council. They are essentially fact sheets, designed to clarify existing federal policies that affect formerly incarcerated individuals and their families in areas such as [public housing](#), access to benefits, [parental rights](#), [employer incentives](#), Medicaid suspension/termination, and more. Some federal laws and policies are narrower than is commonly perceived, as is the case with [public housing](#) and [food assistance benefits](#). In several policy areas, states and localities have broad discretion in determining how policies are applied and/or have various opt-out provisions for states. In some cases, statutory barriers do not exist at all or are very limited, as is the case with [federal hiring](#). In fact, some federal policies and practices contain incentives for assisting the formerly convicted population (i.e., [federal bonding](#) and [tax incentives for employers](#) hiring formerly convicted individuals).

These Fact Sheets can be found on-line at:

http://csgjusticecenter.org/documents/0000/1090/REENTRY_MYTHBUSTERS.pdf.

A summary of the Myth Busters is found below:

MYTH: Individuals who have been convicted of a crime are “banned” from public housing

FACT: Public Housing Authorities have great discretion in determining their admissions and occupancy policies for ex-offenders. While PHA’s can choose to ban ex-offenders from participating in public housing and Section 8 Programs, it is not HUD policy to do so. In fact, in many circumstances, formerly incarcerated people should not be denied access. **There are only two convictions for which a PHA MUST prohibit admission:**

- If any member of the household is subject to a lifetime registration requirement under a State sex offender registration program
- If any household member has ever been convicted of drug-related criminal activity for manufacture or production of methamphetamine on the premises of federally assisted housing

MYTH: People with criminal records are automatically barred from employment.

FACT: An arrest or conviction record will NOT automatically bar individuals from employment. If an employer is aware of a conviction or incarceration, that information should only bar someone from employment when:

- The conviction is closely related to the job
- After considering the nature of the job
- The nature and seriousness of the offense, and the length of time since it occurred

MYTH: The Federal Government's hiring policies prohibit employment of people with criminal records.

FACT: The Federal Government does not have a policy that precludes employment of people with criminal records from all positions. The principle issues for agencies as they consider hiring people with criminal records involve making determinations related to:

- An individual's character traits and conduct to determine whether employment would or would not protect the integrity and promote the efficiency of the federal service
- Whether employment of the individual in the department or agency is consistent with the interests of national security
- The nature, seriousness, and circumstances of the criminal activity and if there has been efforts toward rehabilitation

MYTH: An employer can get a copy of your criminal history from companies that do background checks without your permission.

FACT: According to the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), employers must get one's permission, usually in writing, before asking a background screening company for a criminal history report. If one does not give permission or authorization, the application for employment may not get reviewed. If a person does give permission but does not get hired because of information in the report, the potential employer must follow several legal obligations.

MYTH: Child welfare agencies are required to terminate parental rights if a parent is incarcerated.

FACT: Important exceptions to the requirement to terminate parental rights provide child welfare agencies and states with the discretion to work with incarcerated parents, their children and the caregivers to preserve and strengthen family relationships.

MYTH: Non-custodial parents who are incarcerated cannot have their child support orders reduced.

FACT: Three quarters of the States have the ability to suspend orders during periods of incarceration and 25 States have implemented formalized initiatives or processes to reduce orders during incarceration. However, the process is not automatic. In most states, incarcerated non-custodial parents have to initiate a request for a review of their order before any adjustment or modification can be made.

MYTH: A parent with a felony conviction cannot receive TANF/Welfare.

FACT: The 1996 Welfare ban applies only to convicted drug felons, and only eleven states have kept the ban in place in its entirety. Most states have modified or eliminated the ban.

MYTH: Individuals convicted of a felony can never receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program) benefits.

FACT: This ban only applies to drug felons, and only thirteen states have kept the ban in place in its entirety. Most states have modified or eliminated the ban.

MYTH: An individual cannot apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program) benefits without a valid State-issued identification card.

FACT: A person can get SNAP benefits even if he or she does not have a valid State Identification Card. Acceptable documents include:

- A birth certificate
- An ID card for health benefits or another assistance program (such as VA ID)
- A school or work ID card, wage stubs containing the applicant's name.

MYTH: An individual cannot apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program) benefits without a mailing address.

FACT: A person can get SNAP benefits even if he or she does not have a mailing address. Some common ways local offices ensure that clients without a mailing address receive notices include: holding correspondence at the local office for pick up; using the address of a local shelter (with the shelter's permission); use the address of a trusted friend or family member (with resident's permission); send correspondence to a local post office as a general delivery mail.

MYTH: Incarceration exempts individuals from the requirement to file taxes, halts the accumulation of federal tax debts, and prohibits the receipt of tax credits and deductions upon release.

FACT: Incarceration neither changes one's obligation to pay taxes and tax debts nor prohibits the receipt of tax credits and deductions upon release.

MYTH: Medicaid agencies are required to terminate benefits if an otherwise eligible individual is incarcerated.

FACT: States are not required to terminate eligibility for individuals who are incarcerated based solely on inmate status. States may suspend eligibility during incarceration, enabling an individual to remain enrolled in the state Medicaid program, thereby facilitating access to Medicaid services following release.

SECTION 9:
Additional Resource Information and Contact Numbers:

- **US Department of Veterans Affairs** — www.va.gov
 - ✓ Benefits: 1-800-827-1000,
 - ✓ Medical Centers: 1-877-222-8387, or www.visn16.med.va.gov
 - ✓ Persian Gulf War Helpline: 1-800-749-8387
- **Focus On Recovery Helpline** - A 24-hour national alcohol and drug abuse addiction and treatment hotline: 1-800-888-9383
- **National AIDS Hotline** - Talk to someone who knows about HIV / AIDS and can tell you about AIDS services in your city or state: 1-800-822-7422
- **National Coalition for Homeless Veterans** — www.nchv.org, 1-800-838-4357
- **National Suicide Prevention Hotline** - 1-800- 273-TALK (8255)
- **National Call Center for Homeless Veterans Hotline** – 1-877-4AID-VET (1-877-424-3838) or www1.va.gov/HOMELESS/NationalCallCenter.asp
- **Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs (LDVA)** – 1800-935-8317 or go to www.neworleans.va.gov or <http://www.vetaffairs.com/>
- **Work Force Commission of Louisiana** – 1-800-259-5154 or www.laworks.net
- **Social Security Administration** – www.ssa.gov/
- **Benefits After Incarceration: What you need to know** - <http://www.ssa.gov/reentry/#a0=9>
- **National Coalition for Homeless Veterans** – 1-800-VET-HELP or www.nchv.org/index.cfm

Updated March 2015