

November 2017

# Puerto Rico

# And the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

## General Information

The [Department of Veterans Affairs](http://www.va.gov/) (VA) offers a wide variety of programs and services for the nation’s 22 million veterans and continues to emphasize three long-term goals: increasing access to VA benefits and services, reducing the claims backlog, and eliminating veterans’ homelessness. To accomplish these, VA is focusing on modernizing the way it operates in order to regain the trust of veterans and the country as a whole. The department has instituted five priorities to help focus and intensify VA’s efforts to improve: offer greater choice to veterans; modernize our VA systems; focus resources more efficiently; improve timeliness, and prevent veterans’ suicides.

### Increasing Access

In 2016, more than 9 million veterans were enrolled in [VA health care](http://www.va.gov/health/). With additional staff and expanded hours of operation, nearly 90,000 more participants received health care than the previous year. In 2016, more than 4.6 million veterans and survivors received [VA disability compensation or pensions](http://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/) totaling more than $68 billion. The same year, nearly a million recipients participated in VA’s [GI Bill®](http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/get_started.asp) and [other educational programs](http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/education_programs.asp) with expenditures totaling some $12 billion. More than 137,000 trainees participated in VA’s [vocational rehabilitation and employment](http://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab/index.asp) activities in 2016, and nationally, more than 6.2 million lives were insured through [life insurance](http://www.benefits.va.gov/insurance/) policies valued at more than $1.2 trillion. More than 131,000 veterans and family members were buried in VA’s [national cemeteries](http://www.cem.va.gov/index.asp) and nearly 354,000 headstones and markers were provided for veterans’ graves worldwide.

### Reducing the Claims Backlog

VA defines the backlog as those disability rating claims pending longer than 125 days, which was the minimum length of time VA generally needed to gather all of a veteran’s military service records, request and obtain private medical evidence, conduct VA medical examinations, and decide the claim. Through a multi-faceted claims transformation plan that integrated improvements in people, process and technology, VA went from a paper-bound process that handled 5,000 tons of paper each year to a paperless process, all while completing more claims than ever in our history.  As a result, VA successfully reduced the “claims backlog” from over 611,000 in 2009 to fewer than 75,000 at the end of fiscal year 2016.

### Eliminating Homelessness

Since 2010, more than 600,000 veterans and their family members have been permanently housed, rapidly rehoused, or prevented from falling into homelessness through support provided by VA and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). VA, along with HUD and hundreds of community organizations across the country have reduced the estimated number of homeless veterans by more than 46 percent since 2010. Nearly 80,000 veterans were in permanent housing through the joint HUD-VA Supportive Housing program, a [collaborative program between HUD and VA](http://www.va.gov/homeless/hud-vash.asp) that provides eligible homeless veterans with a Housing Choice rental voucher from HUD and case management and supportive services from VA. VA’s [Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)](http://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf.asp) continues to prevent tens of thousands of veterans and their families from becoming homeless each year. In 2016, more than 61,000 homeless veterans obtained permanent housing through VA homeless programs.  A tally of communities that have effectively ended veteran homelessness can be found online, at <https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/endingVetshomelessness.asp>.

### General Information – Puerto Rico (Fiscal year 2016 data)

* *Number of veterans: 82,574*
* *VA expenditures in Puerto Rico: $1.6 billion*
	+ *Compensation and pensions: $852 million*
	+ *Medical and construction programs: $709 million*
	+ *Insurance and indemnities: $4 million*
	+ *General operating expenses: $21 million*
* *Number of veterans receiving disability compensation or pension payments: 35,211*
* *Number of Puerto Ricans using GI Bill® and other VA education benefits: 6,297*
* *Number of home loans in Puerto Rico backed by VA guarantees: 1,449*
* *Value of Puerto Rico home loans guaranteed by VA: $229 million*
* *Number of VA life insurance policies held by Puerto Rico residents: 3,225*
* *Value of VA life insurance policies held by Puerto Rico residents: $34 million*
* *Number of Puerto Rico participants in VA vocational rehabilitation: 628*
* *Number of veterans buried in Puerto Rico’s VA national cemeteries: 1,791*
* *Number of headstones and markers provided for graves of Puerto Rico veterans and survivors: 3,388*

## Health Care

One of the most visible of all VA benefits is [health care](http://www1.va.gov/health/index.asp). VA provides health care services to veterans at more than 1,200 locations. VA also operates 300 Vet Centers and 80 mobile Vet Centers, which provide readjustment counseling to veterans and their families. In 2016, VA treated more than six million patients during 83 million outpatient visits and more than 557,000 inpatient admissions.  Another 1.46 million received [care in local communities](http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/), funded by VA.  New technologies are expanding access to care.  For example, [VA telehealth programs](http://www.telehealth.va.gov/) – the largest and most comprehensive in the nation – are turning veterans’ homes and communities into preferred sites of care.  In 2016, 12% of all veterans enrolled for VA care received telehealth-based care. This includes more than 2 million telehealth visits touching 702,000 veterans, 45% of them live in rural areas. Outreach using mobile health clinics and [rural health care](http://www.ruralhealth.va.gov/) partnerships continues to expand access to veterans in rural areas.

### Health Care - Puerto Rico

* *Inpatient admissions, statewide, fiscal year 2016:*
* [*San Juan*](http://www.caribbean.va.gov)*: 10,650*
* *Outpatient visits, statewide, fiscal year 2016: 1.1 million*
* *Outpatient* [*clinic locations*](https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/state.asp?state=PR&dnum=1)*:*

Arecibo

Ceiba (Pueblo Ward)

Comerio

Guayama

Mayaguez

Ponce

Utuado

Vieques

* *Veterans* [*Readjustment Counseling*](http://www.vetcenter.va.gov/Vet_Center_Services.asp) *Center**(Vet Centers)* [*Locations*](http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/vetcenter.asp?isFlash=0)*:*

*Arecibo*

*Ponce*

*Rio Piedras*

## Disabilities and Pensions

Not all military service-related issues end when people are [discharged from active duty](https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits-portal/ebenefits.portal).  In 2016, VA paid nearly $65 billion in disability compensation benefits to more than 4.3 million veterans for medical conditions incurred or aggravated during their active military service.  Additionally, VA paid more than $3.4 billion in pension benefits to nearly 289,000 low-income wartime veterans and survivors in 2016.  Veterans and survivors who are eligible for VA pension benefits and are [housebound](http://www.benefits.va.gov/PENSION/aid_attendance_housebound.asp) or require the [aid and attendance](http://www.benefits.va.gov/PENSION/aid_attendance_housebound.asp) of another person may also be eligible to receive additional monetary amounts.

### Disabilities and Pensions - Puerto Rico (Fiscal year 2016 data)

* *Number of veterans receiving monthly disability compensation: 26,918*
* *Number of VA pensions to veterans in Puerto Rico: 8,293*
* *Number of disability claims processed: 11,769*

## Memorial Affairs

Most men and women who served in the military are [eligible for burial](http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/burial_benefits/eligible.asp) in a VA national cemetery, as are their spouses and other eligible family members.  VA manages the country’s [network of national cemeteries](http://www.cem.va.gov/cems/listcem.asp) with approximately 3.6 million [gravesites](http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov/) at 135 national cemeteries in 40 states and Puerto Rico, as well as in 33 soldier’s lots and monument sites.  In 2016, more than 131,000 veterans and dependents were buried in VA's national cemeteries. Additionally, VA provided more than 353,000 [headstones and markers](http://www.cem.va.gov/hmm/index.asp) and over 689,000 [Presidential Memorial Certificates](http://www.cem.va.gov/pmc.asp) to the loved ones of deceased veterans.  VA also has provided funding for the creation of 105 [state veterans cemeteries](http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/grants/veterans_cemeteries.asp) since the [Veterans Cemetery Grants Program](http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/grants/veterans_cemeteries.asp) began in 1978. In 2016, more than 36,000 burials were conducted in state cemeteries.

### Memorial Affairs – Puerto Rico (Fiscal year 2016 data)

* *National cemetery burials in Puerto Rico:*
* [*Puerto Rico National Cemetery*](http://www.cem.va.gov/cems/nchp/puertorico.asp)*: 1,791*
* *Headstones and markers provided (statewide): 3,388*
* *Presidential Memorial Certificates issued (statewide): 1,394*

# # #