

Veterans Corner
By: Robert G. Mitchell
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NYS Property Tax exemption for Serious Disabled Veterans

NYS Real Property Tax law Section 458 (3)

458(3): The primary residence (including necessary land) of a seriously disabled veteran is wholly exempt from taxation, special ad valorem levies, and special assessments, provided that the veteran is either eligible for or had received financial assistance from the United States Government to equip the residence with special facilities to accommodate the veteran's disability. The same exemption is allowed for such a residence owned by the unremarried surviving spouse of such a veteran. Additionally, such unremarried surviving spouse is entitled to transfer the exemption to any new housing unit used as his or her primary residence.

458(3): The property must be owned by a seriously disabled veteran (or by the veteran and his or her spouse, or the unremarried surviving spouse of the veteran) who is either eligible or who has received financial assistance from the United States Government to equip the residence with special facilities necessary to accommodate the veteran's disability (typically, this type of assistance is distributed by the Veterans Administration in the form of a grant under what is now Section 2101 (a) of Title 38 of the U.S. Code to assist veterans who have suffered permanent service connected disability).

458(3): The property must be used as the PRIMARY residence of the seriously disabled veteran and must be specially equipped with fixtures made necessary by the nature of the veteran's disability. To determine if the property is the veteran's primary residence, facts such as the length of time spent on the property, where the veteran votes, and the nature and amount of personal property on the premises should be considered. The sole use requirement for an unremarried surviving spouse of a veteran previously exempt under this statute is that the property must be such spouse's primary residence.

458(3) This exemption applied to both general municipal and school district taxes and is equal to 100% of the assessed valuation of the residence and necessary land.

For more information or on how to apply contact your local assessor.

VA Secretary Seeks Feedback

VA Secretary Jim Nicholson, head of the new inter-agency task force to examine the processes for combat veterans seeking services and benefits from the VA and other federal agencies, announced the creation of a dedicated Web page to solicit input on the ease of accessing federal services. The Web page allows active duty service members, veterans, family members, and others to comment directly to the task force on the accessibility, timeliness and delivery of services. Comments will be studied, used in the panel's evaluation of gaps in service, and form the basis of recommended solution. "As the task force moves forward in studying how we can enhance services and cut red tape, we believe it's important to provide veteran, their family members and other with the opportunity to share their ideas and experiences," said Nicholson.

People can e-mail their comments to the task force at TFHeroes@va.gov or fax comments to 202-273-9599. Task Force information and the mailing address are on the VA homepage at www.va.gov/taskforce. The VA-led task force is independent of the DOD Independent Review Group.

VA Reaches out to Women

Once women return home from a deployment, they have a new designation: veteran. VA is doing its part to reach out to female vets as well. In 1994, it created the Center for Women Veterans, with a mission to make sure that:

- Women vets have access to VA benefits and services on par with male vets.
- VA programs are responsive to gender-specific needs of women.
- There is outreach to improve women vets' awareness of services, benefits and eligibility criteria.
- Women vets are treated with dignity and respect.

Then, in 1996, the Women Veterans Health Program was established, which today offers mental health counseling, medical services and claims assistance. Mental Health services include sexual trauma counseling, substance abuse treatment, PTSD evaluation and treatment, plus programs for the homeless, domestic violence victims and vocational rehabilitation.

Relevant medical services offered by VA include gynecological visits, reproductive health care, osteoporosis evaluation and treatment, a maternity care benefit and infertility evaluation.

Eight women Veterans Comprehensive Health Centers across the country serve as prototypes for women's health care centers. They develop new and enhanced programs focused on the unique health care needs of female vets.

In addition, every VA medical center has a Woman Veterans Program manager on staff to assist female vets with any concerns they may have.

Carle L. Turner national director for the Veterans Health Program and a former Air Force nurse, says much of VA's success in treating women veterans is owed to these managers. "They're there to help women veterans navigate the system," she said. "They try to ensure that the types of issues and concerns women might have or the care they receive are being addressed by staff and facility leaders who are sensitive to those needs."

VA has come a long way in making sure women vets feel comfortable at VA medical centers. "We're seeing a dramatic increase in the number of women veterans turning to VA for health care," Turner says. "And the satisfaction they're expressing about the health care they receive is improving tremendously."

Additionally, all VA regional offices employ a women veterans coordinator trained to assist in handling female conditions and those based on sexual trauma.

"VA offers one-stop care for the majority of biological, psychological and social health care problems women might be experiencing," Turner Said.

In 2008, VA will sponsor its fourth National Summit of Women Veterans Issues in Washington, D.C. the event is scheduled for June 20-22 of that year.