

RESOURCES FOR PENNSYLVANIA MILITARY VETERANS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES



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As a member of our Armed Forces, you have played a very important role in the security and freedom of the United States of America. We are humbled and grateful for your service.

Through your discharge planning process, and the years that will follow, you will be provided with lots of information, referral, and services on a variety of topics from employment, health and mental health care, housing, and much more.

This Veterans Resource Guide was conceived by the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council (PADDC), because young men and women serve their country faithfully and deserve the care and support they need, both when in the service and after returning to civilian life. At times, this does not work as intended. The PADDC funded a project to provide you with the current civilian-side resources available for pre-discharge and post-discharge military personnel. The PADDC believes that prior to discharge, additional information would help veterans make better decisions about their life outside the military. This stems from a lack of services, a lack of information about available services, and the inhibition of a positive disability identity.



This guide will be updated on a regular basis. Please be sure to check www.disabilityrightspa.org for the most recent version of this guide.

Again, we thank you for your service. Please contact Disability Rights Pennsylvania if you have any questions about civilian-side disability resources or discrimination at 1-800-692-7443.



RESOURCES FOR PENNSYLVANIA MILITARY VETERANS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Active duty service members and veterans may have sustained developmental disabilities during their service. Developmental disabilities are physical or mental impairments that arose prior to age 22, are likely to continue indefinitely and require lifelong or extended individualized supports, and result in substantial functional limitations in three or more of the following major life activities – self-care, self-direction, language, learning, mobility, capacity for living independently, and economic self-sufficiency. These disabilities can include:

- ★ Traumatic or other brain injuries
- ★ Post-traumatic stress disorder or other mental health issues
- ★ Substance abuse
- ★ Visual or hearing disabilities
- ★ Physical disabilities

There are many benefits available to active duty service members and veterans with honorable discharges through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs that can support individuals with developmental disabilities.

There are also resources available to Pennsylvania veterans with developmental disabilities that can provide supports, services, and benefits that are outside of the military system.

Some supports, services, and benefits are specific to veterans, while others are not. This brochure provides a brief guide to resources that can help Pennsylvania veterans with developmental disabilities regardless of discharge status. The guide can lead to more information, as well as how to qualify for these services.

TRADITIONAL GENERAL VETERANS RESOURCES

United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) – The VA offers many services, supports, and benefits for veterans, a few of which are described below. To find out about other available benefits, including for instance, education benefits, pension benefits, and home loan benefits, you can call MYVA311 at 1-844-698-2311 (voice) or 711 (TTY) or visit <https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/>.

Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, Office of Veterans Affairs – Pennsylvania, through its Office of Veterans Affairs and other state offices, offers various services and supports to Pennsylvania veterans and their families, a few of which are described below. To find out about other benefits offered to veterans by the state, including for instance, Veterans' Temporary Assistance, which pays up to \$1,600 in a 12-month period for necessities, you can call 1-800-547-2838 (voice) or visit <https://www.dmva.pa.gov/veteransaffairs/Pages/default.aspx>.

County Directors of Veterans Affairs -- Each Pennsylvania county has a Director of Veterans Affairs who can provide you with information and assistance to identify, determine eligibility for, and apply for county, state, and federal veterans' benefit programs. You can call the Office of Veterans Affairs at 1-800-547-2838 (voice) to secure contact information for those County Directors or go to <https://www.dmva.pa.gov/veteransaffairs/Documents/Outreach-and-Reintegration/countyprint.pdf>.

SERVICES FOR VETERANS WITH MENTAL HEALTH OR SUBSTANCE ABUSE DISABILITIES

- ★ **Veterans Crisis Line** – If you are a veteran or know a veteran in crisis, you can contact this crisis line at 1-800-273-8255 (voice), 1-800-799-4889 (TTY), 838255 (text), or chat online at <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>.
- ★ **VA Vet Centers** – The federal VA funds community-based centers that offer a range of counseling, outreach, and referral services for veterans and their families relating to readjustment issues, including those who have post-traumatic stress disorder and substance abuse issues. You can contact 1-877-927-8387 to learn more or visit <https://www.vetcenter.va.gov/>.

Where You Will Go for Mental Health or Substance Abuse Services Outside of the Military

- ★ **Behavioral HealthChoices** – In Pennsylvania, Medicaid mental and behavioral health services are provided through the Behavioral HealthChoices program. Behavioral HealthChoices is a mandatory managed care program. Each county contracts with a Behavioral Health Managed Care Organization (BH-MCO) to provide mental and behavioral health services to Medicaid recipients.

Services include: case management; outpatient services (psychiatrists, psychologists, and other therapeutic services); peer support specialists (including those with veteran-enhanced training); partial hospitalization; inpatient psychiatric care; and outpatient and inpatient substance abuse services.

You can apply for Medicaid by calling 1-866-550-4355, going online through COMPASS at <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/compass.web/Public/CMPHome>, or contacting your local County Assistance Office, which can assist you to complete the form.

A listing of County Assistance Offices is available at <https://www.dhs.pa.gov/Services/Assistance/Pages/CAO-Contact.aspx>. If you are already eligible for Medicaid (or once you become eligible), you will be enrolled automatically in the BH-MCO in your county. To find your county's BH-MCO, visit <http://www.healthchoices.pa.gov/providers/about/behavioral/>. If you have further questions about Behavioral HealthChoices, you can also contact the Help Line for PA's Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services at 1-877-356-5355.

- ★ **County-administered Mental Health Services** – Pennsylvania offers mental health services administered through the county mental health program offices. These services may include supports coordination, treatment, and residential programs. Unlike Medicaid services, these services may be available regardless of income though, due to funding limits, not all services will be available to all individuals who need them. You can find contact information for your county mental health program at <http://www.mhdspa.org/Pages/Local-Contacts.aspx> or contact the Help Line for PA's Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services at 1-877-356-5355.
- ★ **Substance/Alcohol Abuse Help Line** – If you need help to find a substance or alcohol abuse treatment provider or funding for addiction treatment, call 1-800-662-HELP.
- ★ **County Drug and Alcohol Agencies** – In Pennsylvania, there are a variety of substance and alcohol abuse programs that are administered through county program offices known as Single County Authorities (SCAs). The SCAs determine whether you are eligible for service funding, assess need for treatment, and make referrals to appropriate programs. To find your local SCA, visit <https://apps.ddap.pa.gov/gethelpnow/CountyServices.aspx>.

SERVICES FOR VETERANS WITH BRAIN INJURIES

- ★ **PA Brain Injury Help Line** – Pennsylvania’s Department of Health operates a help line for individuals with brain injuries and their families to assist them to identify and access services. You can contact the help line at 1-866-412-4755.
- ★ **Brain Injury Resource Line and Support Groups** – The Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania staffs a help line to provide resources that may be helpful to individuals with brain injury and their families and lists support groups that may assist those individuals. You can contact the help line at 1-800-444-6443 and find a listing of support groups at <https://biapa.org/programs/support-group-listing/>.
- ★ **PA Head Injury Program (HIP)** – The Pennsylvania Head Injury program pays for head injury rehabilitation services to help individuals with traumatic brain injury to live independently in their homes and communities. To learn more about HIP, call 1-717-772-2763, email RA-BFHHIP@pa.gov, or visit <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/programs/Pages/Head-Injury.aspx>.
- ★ **PA Community HealthChoices Long-Term Services and Supports (CHC LTSS)** – This program is for Medicaid-eligible individuals age 21 and older who need the level of care provided by a nursing facility.

The program provides services through a managed care organization to enable eligible individuals to avoid placement in a nursing facility by providing them in-home and community-based services and supports, including: personal assistance services, community integration services, cognitive rehabilitation therapy and other therapies (physical, occupational, speech, and behavioral), residential habilitation, assistive technology, specialized medical equipment and supplies, home and vehicle modifications, job training and employment skills development, in-home nursing and home health aides, financial management services, and transportation.

CHC LTSS is available to veterans, including those who have brain injuries or physical disabilities, if they meet the financial and clinical eligibility criteria. To apply for CHC LTSS, call the Independent Enrollment Broker (IEB) at 1-877-550-4227.

- ★ **PA Intellectual Disability Services** – You may be eligible for these services if you sustained injuries before age 22 that resulted in significant cognitive and functional deficits, so that you meet the requirements for having an “intellectual disability.” Pennsylvania primarily provides services to Medicaid-eligible individuals with intellectual disabilities through home- and community-based programs.

Services available through these Medicaid programs may include: residential services and supports, in-home and community supports, companion services, specialized medical equipment and supplies, therapies (physical, occupational, speech, music, and art), behavioral support, assistive technology, home and vehicle modifications, vocational supports and services, homemaker/chore services, specialized supplies, and transportation. There are waiting lists for these intellectual disability Medicaid programs. In addition, Pennsylvania offers some more-limited intellectual disability services, including case management for individuals who may be on the waiting lists or who do not meet the financial requirements for the Medicaid programs.

To apply for all of these intellectual disability services, you need to contact your county office of intellectual disability services. Contact information for the county office can be found at <http://pafamiliesinc.org/understanding-systems/intellectual-disabilities/intellectual-developmental-disabilities-county-contact-information-for-pennsylvania> or by calling PA's Office of Developmental Programs Customer Service Line at 1-888-565-9435 (voice) or 1-866-388-1144 (TTY).



SERVICES FOR VETERANS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

- ★ **Community HealthChoices Long-Term Services and Supports (CHC LTSS)** – For more information on these services and how to apply, see the description in Services for Veterans with Brain Injuries.
- ★ **Amputee and Paralyzed Veterans' Pension** – This Pennsylvania program provides a pension of \$150/month for veterans who experienced a service-connected injury or disease resulting in the loss or loss of use of two or more extremities. To apply, contact your County Director of Veterans Affairs as detailed in the General Veterans Resources section.

SERVICES FOR VETERANS WITH VISUAL DISABILITIES



- ★ **PA Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS)** – This agency assists Pennsylvanians with visual disabilities to gain the skills they need to live and work independently, including vocational evaluations, blindness skills training, mobility (travel) instruction, vocational and college training, job tools and equipment, and job placement services. To find more information about BBVS services and contact information for your local BBVS field office, call 800-622-2842 or visit <https://www.dli.pa.gov/Individuals/Disability-Services/bbvs/Pages/default.aspx>.
- ★ **Blind Veterans' Pension** – This Pennsylvania program provides a pension of \$150/month for veterans who experienced a service-related injury or incurred a disease that resulted in substantial loss of vision. To apply, contact your County Director of Veterans Affairs as detailed in the General Veterans Resources section.

SERVICES AND BENEFITS FOR VETERANS WITH HEARING DISABILITIES

- ★ **PA Office of the Deaf & Hard of Hearing (ODHH)** – This state agency provides advocacy services for people with hearing loss who are not receiving proper services from government or private agencies, information on issues relevant to people with hearing loss, and referrals to appropriate organizations. To contact ODHH, call 1-717-783-4912 (voice/TTY), 1-717-831-1928 (videophone), email ra-li-ovr-odhh@pa.gov, or visit <https://www.dli.pa.gov/Individuals/Disability-Services/odhh/Pages/default.aspx>.

JOB TRAINING/VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION FOR VETERANS

- ★ **Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (VR&E)** – This federal VA program assists veterans with service-connected disabilities to obtain employment and/or achieve independent living goals. For more information on the services and how to apply, contact the VA as described in General Veterans Resources or go to <https://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab/index.asp>.
- ★ **PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)** – This agency helps people with disabilities to prepare for, obtain, or maintain employment. OVR's services can include counseling and guidance, diagnostic services, vocational evaluations, training, placement assistance, assistive technology, home/vehicle/job-site modifications, and personal care assistance to participate in a vocational rehabilitation program.

OVR has specialized counselors who serve veterans with disabilities, and each of the 15 OVR district offices has a veterans coordinator. To get more information and find your local OVR office, call 1-800-442-6351 (voice) or 1-866-830-7327 (TTY), or visit <https://www.dli.pa.gov/Individuals/Disability-Services/ovr/Pages/default.aspx>.





ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Assistive technology consists of devices used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of people with disabilities and services that can help people with disabilities to select, acquire, and use those devices.

Some of the programs described above can provide eligible participants with assistive technology, such as Community HealthChoices, Medicaid waivers for individuals with intellectual disabilities, and OVR. The following organizations can also help you gain access to assistive technology:

- ★ **Technology for Our Whole Lives (TechOWL)** – TechOWL is the Pennsylvania Initiative on Assistive Technology (PIAT), part of Temple University’s Institute on Disabilities. TechOWL helps people with disabilities to explore, find, and access the tools and technology they need to live independently. To contact TechOWL, call 1-800-204-7428, email TechOWL@temple.edu or visit <https://techowlpa.org/>.
- ★ **Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation (PATF)** – This program provides education and financing opportunities for people with disabilities to help them acquire assistive technology to improve their lives. To contact PATF, call 1-888-744-1938, email patf@patf.us, or visit <https://patf.us/>.

HOUSING/HOMELESS ASSISTANCE FOR VETERANS

- ★ **Home Accessibility Assistance** – The federal VA administers several grant programs that can provide some funding to veterans with specified disabilities to help buy, build, or adapt an existing home to accommodate their disabilities. For more information about these various grant programs, contact the VA as described above or go to <https://www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/adaptedhousing.asp> and <https://www.prosthetics.va.gov/psas/HISA2.asp>.
- ★ **Homeless Hotline** – The federal VA offers a hotline that can provide support and help identify services for veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. You can contact the hotline at 1-877-424-3838 or chat online by visiting <https://www.va.gov/homeless/crc.asp>.
- ★ **Community Resource and Referral Centers (CRRCs)** – The federal VA funds CRRCs, which provide veterans who are homeless with one-stop access to community-based, multi-agency services to find housing, health and mental health care, career development, and access to VA and non-VA benefits. There is a CRRC in Philadelphia at 213 N. 4th Street, 2nd Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19106.
- ★ **HUD-VASH Supporting Housing Program** – The federal VA and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development operate this program to offer supportive housing for veterans who are homeless. Veterans eligible for this program receive rental assistance vouchers for housing and assistance from VA case managers to help them connect to support services, including mental health and substance abuse treatment. For more information on how to apply, call 1-877-424-3838 or visit <https://www.va.gov/homeless/hud-vash.asp>.
- ★ **Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans Program and Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation and Treatment Programs** – These federal VA programs offer residential care for sheltered and unsheltered veterans with multiple challenges, illnesses, or rehabilitative care needs, mental illness, or addiction. You can find out more information at 1-877-424-3838 or by visiting <https://www.va.gov/homeless/dchv.asp>.



CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESOURCES

- ★ **Veterans Justice Outreach Program (VJO)** – The federal VA’s VJO provides outreach to veterans involved in the local criminal justice system to secure timely access to VA services, so that veterans can secure necessary treatment and avoid criminalization. Each VA medical center has a VJO specialist who serves as a liaison between the VA and the criminal justice system. For more information about the VJO and to find the contacts for the local VJO specialists in Pennsylvania, visit <https://www.va.gov/homeless/vjo.asp>.
- ★ **Health Care for Reentry Veterans (HCRV)** – The federal VA developed the HCRV program to provide pre-release outreach, assessment, linkage, and brief post-release case management for veterans released from federal and state prisons to promote successful reentry by assuring their access to appropriate rehabilitation and treatment services to prevent homelessness, ease readjustment to community life, and avoid re-incarceration. For more information about HCRV and how to contact the PA specialist, visit <https://www.va.gov/homeless/reentry.asp>.
- ★ **Veterans Treatment Courts** – Veterans Treatment Courts are specialized criminal courts established in some Pennsylvania counties, including for instance, Philadelphia, Allegheny, Dauphin, Erie, Berks, Lancaster, and York to address the unique needs of veterans charged with non-violent crimes who have mental health and/or substance abuse issues. The goal of these courts is to divert eligible veterans from the traditional criminal justice system and provide them with treatment and support. More information about these courts can be found at <http://www.pacourts.us/judicial-administration/court-programs/veterans-courts>.
- ★ **Veterans Service Units (VSUs) of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC)** – The DOC operates housing units for incarcerated veterans known as VSUs in five of its state correctional institutions. The goal of the VSUs is to prepare veterans for successful release by providing treatment, including treatment for brain injuries, mental health and substance abuse issues, as well as addressing needs related to education, vocational training, life-skills training, and housing. Many of the staff on the VSUs are veterans. Reentry parole agents facilitate workshops and provide one-to-one supports for veterans in VSUs. For veterans not confined in prisons with VSUs, DOC has Veterans Services Offices that can offer some similar re-entry programming. More information about these services can be found at <https://www.parole.pa.gov/Parole%20Supervision/VET/Pages/default.aspx>.



LEGAL SERVICES RESOURCES

- ★ **Legal Aid** – The Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network consists of independent legal aid programs that provide legal assistance to low-income individuals in certain civil cases, which may (but does not necessarily) include landlord-tenant, foreclosure, federal benefits, such as Medicaid and food stamps, and other issues. To find the legal aid provider in your community, visit <https://palegalaid.net/legal-aid-providers-in-pa>.
- ★ **Disability Rights Pennsylvania (DRP)** – DRP is a nonprofit organization that operates an intake hotline to provide information, advice, and referral services to Pennsylvanians with disabilities on issues related to their disabilities, such as abuse and neglect, disability services, and disability discrimination. You can contact DRP's intake hotline at 1-800-692-7443 or by fill out and submit an intake form online at <https://www.disabilityrightspa.org/get-help/intake/>.

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