

Disabled veterans and their widows may qualify for additional benefits

Veteran's pension is a cash benefit paid to war-time veterans who have limited or no income. Veterans 65 and older automatically qualify to receive this benefit. Those under 65 years of age must be permanently and totally disabled.

In addition to the cash benefit, veterans who are more seriously disabled may qualify for Aid and Attendance or Household Benefits, paid in addition to their basic pension rates. The most common use for this benefit package includes medical care for veterans in non-combat related injuries, such as a stroke or vehicle accident – leaving them permanently disabled. Benefits may also include compensation for an assisted living facility; a popular option for those who are no longer able to care for themselves.

Veterans and widows of veterans considering a transition to an assisted living facility may be eligible for the Aid and Attendance benefit package. The package, in addition to paying for the cost of the assisted living facility, may also pay a monthly stipend of \$1,758 to \$2,020 to help with living expenses.

A widow of a war-time veteran may also apply for the Widows Pension with Aid and Attendance benefit package, making them eligible to receive up to \$1,139 a month. Again, income from any source must be offset by medical expenses, and liquid assets must be lower than \$80,000. If one's income is not totally offset, the benefit package may be pro-rated.

Other medical expenses may also qualify, including medications, in-home support, co-pays and too many others to mention here. Our advice to you is that if you feel you or your family may be eligible for this or any other veterans benefit package, contact our office and ask to speak with one of our knowledgeable staff. Our goal is to help you find the facilities and benefit packages that best meet your needs.

In addition to the resources my office provides, we work closely with the Helping Hands Senior Resource Center in Vacaville. Together we have successfully matched hundreds of veterans with the benefit packages they need, including the Aid and Attendance and Household Benefit programs. Their office can be reached at (707) 451-8742. Ask for Melanie Richardson.

Ted Puntillo is Director of Veteran's Services for Solano County. Reach him at (707) 784-6590 or tepuntillo@SolanoCounty.com. The Solano County Veteran's Services Office, 675 Texas St. in Fairfield, is open from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.