

Biden Vows to Expand Benefits. What Veterans Should Know.

Chas Sampson, CEO of Seven Principles offer five pointers veterans should know about VA disability

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President Biden has vowed to expand benefits for Veterans and their families. Often when an expansion of benefits happens many Veterans remain uninformed of how to execute their options. Here are five things to know.

1. Mental health care for Veterans

Currently, we are experiencing nearly 2 dozen deaths by suicides amongst veterans each day. I've personally dealt with suicidal thoughts and have

worked with many of our clients that have shared their suicidal ideation with me. The current resources aren't enough to support Veterans across the world. President Biden must be commended for his profound leadership in finding solutions to assist my veteran brothers and sisters that deal with suicidal ideation as well as creating solutions to prevent more suicides amongst veterans. It's my belief that to effectively solve this issue there has to be an effort to staff consistent mental health providers. Oftentimes when Veterans are seen by mental health professionals, they are taking a huge step in their lives to communicate their lowest times or darkest issues. As veterans, we are mostly conservative in sharing information, especially with those with whom we don't have a current medical relationship. Often mental health providers change teams within the hospital or transition to another hospital or job. When this happens, many Veterans lose trust in the system as the next provider, in comparison to the past provider, may be deemed as inadequate. In other scenarios, some veterans will cease care altogether. Having a consistent long-term mental health provider is key in the well-being of our veterans.



Chas Sampson, CEO of Seven Principles Group

2. The Expansion of Presumptive Conditions

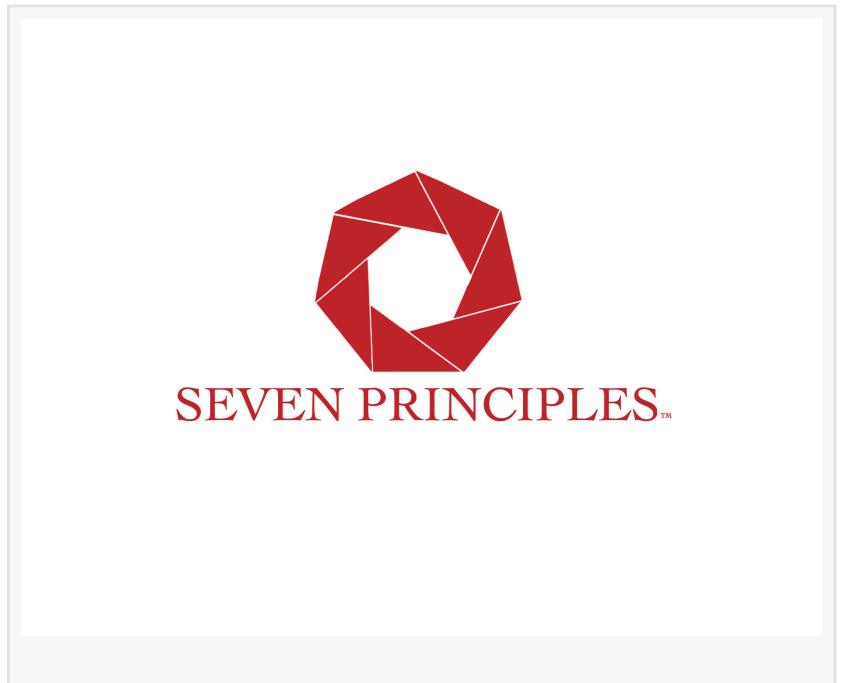
As a Veteran and more importantly as an advocate and VA claims expert the expansion of presumptive conditions is past due. For Veterans exposed to Agent Orange and burn pits the residual conditions we suffer from on a daily basis go untreated in most cases and uncompensated in almost all cases. For readers, presumptive conditions are outlined in 38 CFR 3.309. Many of the clients we work with often fail to be seen by medical

professionals which negatively affects their claims with the VA. Here are some key takeaways for Veterans when it comes to presumptive conditions.

- i. If it's not in writing; it doesn't exist. Many Veterans often will self-medicate to heal themselves or wait until the condition is nearly fatal to seek help. If you're not being seen by a medical professional and getting your condition examined, you stand the chance of having your ailments denied when you present them to the VA. Instead, keep documentation of your symptoms and remain consistent with follow-up medical visits for your conditions.
- ii. Connect the dots. Many Veterans that we work with are under the false impression that the VA will have a clear understanding of their claim and be able to "conclude" a nexus for service connection. As a claimant, you must be able to clearly connect the dots of your claim which includes articulating the event in service, a diagnosis from service, the chronicity of the condition, and most importantly a nexus.
- iii. Don't give up! We get calls every day from Veterans around the world that are frustrated and have given up on the process. Our oldest client was a 95-year-old Korean War veteran that spent 60+ years trying to establish his claim. After being denied several times- we were able to help him reach his goal of being service-connected. The key to his success is that he never gave up on the process.

3. Improvement of care at VA hospitals

Modern healthcare across many VA medical centers has significantly increased. Every day I and members of our firm analyze medical records of veterans from military service as well as after military service. The key issue we find in helping our clients and reviewing the evidence is staffing within VA medical centers (VAMC) across the country. I would encourage Congress and the White House to analyze barriers in the workplace amongst hospitals across the nation. Oftentimes, these medical professionals are overworked and short-staffed which creates the illusion of poor quality within VAMC's across the nation; in reality, the recruitment of more medical providers is



needed to effectively manage the demand of the current veteran population as well as military service-members that are transitioning.

4. Service Connection should be a topic

Oftentimes the White House and Congress address the macro issues amongst veterans such as homelessness, healthcare, and benefits. A key issue that is often not talked about but needs to be addressed is service connection. Service connection is the highest and best way for a veteran to receive health care benefits, especially if the veteran is rated less than 50% or the condition is not service-connected. Oftentimes, the vernacular of “benefits” can be misleading to the misinformed or uninformed veteran. If your condition is not considered service-connected, in some cases the veteran may experience difficulty in obtaining cost-free care from the VA. Educating veterans on the ground of service connection and proof, in my belief, will lower the amounts of backlog cases and also help veterans better navigate their claims and health options.

5. Evidence will always be key in winning

Often when different administrations provide expanded benefits for Veterans, we as Veterans, often forget the key element to win, evidence. Simply put, if it's not in writing, it doesn't exist. Having medical documentation of the etiology and severity of the condition is key to winning your VA claim. Veterans often find themselves in frustrating claims due to not meeting the principles of service connection which require a diagnosis, event in service, nexus, and chronicity. Following the simple method of the principles of service connection will help Veterans win their claims.

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