



America's Defenders

VA Streamlines Care For Veterans Of Iraqi Freedom

(NAPSA)—The U.S. forces engaged in Operation Iraqi Freedom won a war and toppled a ruthless regime in a matter of days. However, the effort to keep the peace and rebuild a nation continues to produce U.S. military casualties.

As a result, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is working closely with the Department of Defense to ensure that America's newest generation of war-wounded veterans receive the best treatment possible without delay.

With combat casualties flowing back to military hospitals in the United States, VA makes sure the wounded soldiers know what their veterans' health care and benefits options are even before they are discharged from military service.

VA offers special health care benefits to newly discharged combat veterans under a program that provides free care for conditions that may be related to military service for two years after discharge from the military. The benefit waives the usual requirement that veterans prove a connection between medical problems and military service, or that they fall below minimum income level.

As part of the VA effort, hospital social workers and benefits counselors are assigned to military hospital casualty reception centers. The social workers visit wounded soldiers and their families and help smooth the transition from military to civilian life.

For the first time, VA is enrolling combat-wounded veterans into the VA health care system before they formally leave military service. This enables the veterans to choose treatment in a facility nearest their homes as they recuperate and await discharge.

In addition, there is a specific point of contact for veterans of Iraqi



The Department Of Veterans Affairs now offers special health care benefits to newly discharged combat veterans.

Freedom and Enduring Freedom—the conflict in Afghanistan—at each VA medical center and regional benefits office to assist the vets and their families.

America's newest generation of combat veterans receives the same benefits traditionally associated with military service, including disability compensation for service-connected injuries and health problems, VA pensions for those with limited incomes, VA home loan guarantees and educational assistance under the Montgomery GI Bill.

National Guard and Reserve members called to active duty are eligible for VA health care for service-connected conditions, and for VA benefits depending on length of active military service.

For more information contact the nearest VA medical center or clinic and ask for the Iraqi war veteran contact office or call toll free 1-877-222-8387. For benefits information, call 1-800-827-1000 or visit www.va.gov.