

# Do you qualify for VA Health Care?

Answer a few questions to find out if you qualify for free or low-cost health care from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Are either of the following statements true?

- You served in the active military, naval, or air service and were honorably discharged.
- You were/are a Reservist or National Guard member and you were called to active duty by a Federal Order (for other than training purposes) and you completed the full call-up period.

The VA provides a wide range of benefits including Disability, Education, and Training, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment, Home Loan Guaranty, Dependant and Survivor benefits, Medical Treatment, Life Insurance, and Burial benefits, as well as contact phone numbers and locations.

There are several ways to apply for VA benefits including the Pre-Discharge Program, The Veterans On-line Application and you can apply at your local regional offices. Don't forget the County Veterans Service Office plus many of the veterans' organizations also have VSO as does the VA Health Care Systems

such as Livermore and Palo Alto.

Be sure to visit the VA's web site ([www1.va.gov/opa/newtova.asp](http://www1.va.gov/opa/newtova.asp)).

## PTSD, *from page 2*

know he had fought in some of the bloodiest battles of the war. He came back a "changed and traumatized man," the high court said. The sentencing jury would likely have spared Porter from the death penalty if it had known of his "horrifying" battlefield experiences, the justices said.

AB 2586 was the first bill in the United States that offered alternative sentencing to combat veterans of all wars. AB 2586 was cited by the Supreme Court in its ruling as evidence that changes concerning veterans with PTSD were being made by the judicial system.

This ruling is of major importance because it is the first time Supreme Court has recognized the long-term, traumatic impact of combat on our veterans. It will undoubtedly be cited in many cases throughout the nation. But the goal of California's law is not to spare veterans from the death penalty but to offer them the treatment that prevents their trauma from escalating out of control as it did for George Porter.

Perhaps if such a law was on the books when George Porter returned from Korea, he would have gotten treatment the first time he committed a minor crime, and not only his life but those of his victims would have been spared.

California has made a good start but the battle is not won. This year, a coalition of veterans groups, led by the Vietnam Veterans of America, is supporting AB 1925 by Assemblywoman Mary Salas. AB 1925 is a bill that would allow counties to establish courts for veterans, just as there are other special courts. Several counties, such as Orange, Santa Clara and San Bernardino, have already established veterans' courts. AB 1925 would provide a framework for those counties that wish to avoid the mistakes made by the legal system during and after the Vietnam War and are still being made today.

These are Americans who have volunteered to go in harm's way in defense of freedom. They may not have shed their blood in battle but they carry within them wounds we cannot see, wounds that we must help them heal.

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