

# Veterans Living with ALS

Studies have shown that Veterans are 1.5 to 2 times as likely as civilians to be diagnosed with ALS. Veterans who are diagnosed with ALS and served in the U.S. military for 90 or more consecutive days of active duty and have been honorably discharged are eligible for disability compensation and healthcare through the VA.

Veterans with ALS who did not serve 90 or more days of active duty, served in the military reserves, or had an other-than-honorable discharge are encouraged to contact their local VA ALS Coordinator to discuss their eligibility for benefits and care.

Eligible Veterans can receive critical benefits such as:

- Disability Compensation
- Access to VA ALS Clinics
- Copayment Exempt Healthcare
- Home Health Care Benefits
- Caregiver Support and Caregiver Stipend Benefits
- Home Modification Benefits
- CHAMPVA Benefits
- Durable Medical Equipment and Assistive Technology
- Automobile Grant
- Recreation Therapy and Adaptive Sports



## How do I apply for service-connected benefits?

To apply for your service-connected benefits, we strongly recommend reaching out to a Veterans Service Organization like the Paralyzed Veterans of America ([www.pva.org](http://www.pva.org)). Navigating the VA system on your own can be a confusing and frustrating process. PVA can be your advocate—they will explain your benefits, answer questions, give you tips, help you with paperwork, and expedite your application, which may take 90 days or so to get approved.

While waiting for your benefits, you should get connected with your local ALS Network care manager. You can receive support from the VA and your care manager at the same time. In addition, ALS Network can provide much-needed support to your loved ones during this process.

## Can I attend an ALS clinic before getting approved?

Yes, it is very important to begin attending an ALS clinic as soon as possible after your diagnosis. Even if you have not yet been approved for service-connected benefits, you can request a referral to VA ALS clinics and services as long as you have a confirmed ALS diagnosis and supporting documentation.

There is an established process that can get you the care you need while you are waiting for approval. A VA staff person, often a social worker or nurse care coordinator, should be able to guide you through the process and discuss your options.

## Can I attend a non-VA ALS clinic?

Yes. You can choose to go to a community ALS clinic, though most veterans eventually make the transition to the VA because all their care and benefits can be coordinated in one place. If you choose to attend an ALS clinic outside of the VA, you will need to use other insurance to pay for your care. If there is no VA ALS clinic in your area, your local VA may make a referral and pay for you to attend a community ALS clinic.

## If I was diagnosed at a non-VA clinic, can I attend both clinics?

It's best to narrow your ALS care down to one clinic. Most Veterans would agree that the VA ALS clinics provide comprehensive and streamlined care. Given there is a shortage of ALS clinics in the private sector, it's best not to use two clinic slots simultaneously once you have decided on which ALS clinic works best for you.

## Can I receive VA benefits and Medicare benefits?

Yes. In addition to your VA benefits, you can also qualify for and receive Medicare benefits—as long as you are eligible. Medicare can help you pay for services outside the VA system that the VA might not cover, such as visits to non-VA ALS clinics or other medical professionals. If you don't qualify for Medicare, you will still receive full coverage within the VA system.

## Can I receive VA benefits and Medicaid benefits?

When you are diagnosed with ALS and start receiving monetary disability compensation from the VA, you will no longer qualify for Medicaid benefits. If you also have Medicare, that will continue to be your primary insurance and the VA will become secondary.

### Get Local Support



*Formerly ALS Golden West*

[www.alsnetwork.org](http://www.alsnetwork.org)

(866) 750-2572

[info@alsnetwork.org](mailto:info@alsnetwork.org)

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