

10. Former Prisoners of War (Former POW)

Introduction This topic provides information on the outreach program for Former Prisoners of War (POW).

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a. Overview of Former Prisoners of War Outreach Program The purpose of this program is to advise Former Prisoners of War of all VA benefits and services to which they may be entitled. As the number of FPOWs continues to decrease, outreach to FPOWs and family members is very critical. Increased benefits and special services may be available to this aging population and it is incumbent upon VA to apply due diligence when handling these considerations.

b. Definition – Former Prisoner of War The term Former Prisoner of War means a person who, while serving in the active military, naval or air service, was forcibly detained or interned in the line of duty by an enemy or foreign government, the agents of either, or a hostile force. (38 CFR Part 3.1(y))

c. The FPOW Coordinator Each RO, NCC, and Pension Management Center (PMC) has a designated FPOW Coordinator. The FPOW Coordinator is responsible for providing benefit information and claims assistance to former POWs and their spouses and families.

d. FPOW Coordinator Duties FPOW Coordinator duties include:

- meeting regularly with FPOW groups in the RO's jurisdiction.
- planning activities for FPOW celebrations, and include Missing in Action (MIA) family members.
- coordinating activities with VHA for FPOW activities they sponsor.
- participating in local FPOW events and provide training to organizations that may include FPOWs.
- acting as the point of contact for VA and other service providers for FPOWs and their families.
- establishing a network among community service providers and share information on claims processing with FPOW coordinators at VAMCs, Vet Centers, and other community organizations.

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d. FPOW Coordinator Duties (continued)

- developing a resource directory of service providers within the RO community that may provide services specifically to this special interest group, provide the directory to appropriate VA personnel and others providing assistance to FPOWs.
 - establishing a liaison with FPOW organizations, maintain rosters of the primary contacts, and provide speakers for their meetings and for special events when appropriate.
 - advertising information about VA benefits and services in places where FPOWs live or frequently visit.
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e. FPOW Claims

Former POW coordinators must assure that priority attention is given to claims received from FPOWs. FPOW claims must be flagged and hand-carried to the Former POW coordinator in the RO. Former POW coordinators should:

- familiarize themselves with the service-connected presumptive conditions as per 38 CFR 3.309(c)(1)(2) and the POW experiences related to captivity.
- create a network with the VAMC Physicians to facilitate the rating of claims and address any questions regarding claims.

Note: VHA Directive 2011-018, dated March 21, 2011, provides for the implementation of a mandatory education and certification program for the Special Former Prisoners of War (FPOW) Care and Benefits Teams (CBTs). These teams are the main liaisons between the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and FPOW. The CBTs will consist of VBA and VHA employees. VBA employees must adhere to guidance set forth by VBA Policy and Directives.

- telephone the FPOW or surviving spouse if information is needed to complete a claim or a form has not been returned.
- process any paperwork from the claims file or from a telephone contact, making it as easy as possible for the claimant.

For more information on Live Claims see:

- M21-1MR, Part IV, Subpart ii, Ch 1, Section G (Development)
- M21-1MR, Part IV, Subpart ii, Ch 2, Section E (Rating)

For more information on procedures for preparing Administrative Decisions see:

- M21-1MR, Part III, Subpart v, Ch 1, Section C
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**f. Retrieval
Information for
POW
Verification
Data**

If you need to verify POW status of an individual, send your verification request, *via encrypted e-mail* to: VAVBAWAS/CO/OUTREACH

**g. FPOW
Coordinator
Directory**

For the complete coordinator list, go to:

http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/27/outreach/veterans/fpow/pow_index.htm

**h. FPOW
Pamphlets**

The Former Prisoners of War Outreach Intranet web page has various topics to help a FPOW coordinator. The web page can be found at:

<http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/27/outreach/veterans/fpow/index.htm>

Benefits and Services for Former Prisoners of War, VA Pamphlet 21-01-1, March 2004. For additional copies or stock replenishment e-mail:

VAVBAWAS/CO/OUTREACH