

13. Foreign Service Program

Introduction This topic provides information on the Foreign Service Program.

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a. Benefits and Services of the Foreign Service Program The Foreign Service Program provides VA benefits, and services to U.S. Veterans and their families who live overseas. The Foreign Service Nationals (FSN), employees of the U.S. Department of State, administers the program.

Virtually all monetary benefits (compensation, pension, burial, education) administered by VA are payable regardless of nationality or place of residence.

There are, however, some program limitations in foreign jurisdictions:

- reimbursed medical treatment is limited to treatment of adjudicated service-connected disabilities.
 - home loan guaranty benefits are available only in selected U.S. territories and possessions.
 - educational benefits are limited to approved degree granting programs in institutions of higher learning.
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b. Program Oversight of the Foreign Service Program The Benefits Assistance Service (BAS), Client Services Outreach Staff, currently monitors service delivery overseas. As such, the staff is responsible for assessing the quality of assistance available to Veterans at American embassies and consulates and district offices of Veterans Affairs Canada. The staff also evaluates the quality of service provided by involved VA offices to American embassies and consulates and Veterans Affairs Canada.

The BAS Staff is involved in a myriad of other activities associated with the foreign program such as:

- developing procedures and monitoring delivery of burial markers, headstones and burial flags overseas.
 - supplying embassies, consulates and Veterans Affairs Canada with VA pamphlets and applications.
 - troubleshooting for Veterans inquiries.
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c. Claims Processing for Foreign Compensation and Pension Claims

The Houston VA Regional Office processes claims from:

- Mexico
- South and Central America, and
- the Caribbean.

The Pittsburgh VA Regional Office has responsibility for processing foreign compensation claims from all other countries with the exception of Canada and the Philippines.

The VA Regional Office Center in White River Junction handles benefit claims from Canada, the VA Regional Office in Manila process the compensation and pension claims in the Philippines.

The Pension Management Center located in St. Paul, MN processes the pension claims from:

- Mexico
- Central and South America, and
- the Caribbean

Pension claims for all other countries with the exception of the Philippines are processed at the Philadelphia Pension Management Center.

d. Education Claims for Veterans Attending Foreign Schools

Education claims for Veterans or dependents attending foreign schools are processed by the Regional Processing Center in Buffalo, New York. Education claims for Veterans or dependents attending foreign branches of American universities are processed by the Regional Processing Center having responsibility for the main U.S. campus of the university.

e. Foreign Medical Program

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) administers the Foreign Medical Program (FMP), located at the VHA Center in Denver, CO. The FMP manages the activity through which Veterans residing or traveling in foreign countries can obtain reimbursed medical treatment for adjudicated service-connected disabilities.

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**e. Foreign
Medical
Program**
(continued)

This does not include medical care in the Philippines, Puerto Rico or Guam where VA medical facilities exist or in Canada where care is provided through the Veterans Affairs' Canada. The FMP is managed similar to a health insurance system whereby Veterans enroll in the program with acceptance based on VA-related disabilities. The FMP also reimburses the medical providers that provide the required compensation exams administered in foreign countries.

**f. Direct
Assistance for
Veterans
Overseas**

Benefits information and assistance are available to Veterans and their families worldwide at American embassies and consulates through the Federal Benefits Program (FBP). The Department of State (Office of Citizens Consular Services), Department of Veterans Affairs (Benefits Assistance Services Staff), and the Social Security Administration (Office of International Operations) jointly manage the FBP.

On-site and/or day-to-day activities of the Federal Benefits Program are supervised by seven Regional Federal Benefits Officers (RFBO) located in Rome, Frankfurt, London, Athens, Manila, Mexico City and San Jose (Costa Rica). These program managers are Social Security Administration employees temporarily assigned under Foreign Service commissions to the Department of State. Each is assigned a specific regional area of responsibility.