

## VA Disability Ratings

There are many benefits available to veterans from both state and federal agencies. Many of these benefits are only available to veterans with service-connected disabilities. The Veterans Administration (VA) determines the level of disability using a rating system. Veterans are rated at 0% to 100% disabled depending on the severity of their disabilities.

You must file a claim to receive a disability rating. You can file a claim for disability at any time. It is recommended that service members file within the first year of discharge so all reasonable medical conditions that occurred during service can be identified as service-connected. These medical conditions may be rated at 0%, or may be considered a disability and receive a higher rating. Either way, they are now service-connected and if you have problems later in life, VA will provide medical care and possibly increase the disability rating.

If it has been more than a year since separation from military service, the task of establishing service-connection is a bit more difficult. We have had veterans come into our office that were separated over twenty years ago and are able to build a case for benefits, and get it approved. We can and will assist you with your claim.

To get the claim completed as soon as possible, we need a copy of your discharge papers (DD214), a copy of your medical records if you have them and any additional statements from your doctor about your current medical conditions. If you don't have copies, we can order them. As an example, a 0% disability rating for a mild hearing loss qualifies the children of a veteran for the California College Fee Waiver Program.

There are many state and federal benefits and programs available to veterans and their dependents. To find out if you are eligible for any of these benefits, visit or call our office. We can and will assist you in completing all required application forms. You can also get information on the web from the Kings County Veterans Service Office website at [www.countyofkings.com](http://www.countyofkings.com).

- *Joe Wright, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Veterans Service Officer for Kings County. Send your questions to the Veterans Service Office, 1400 West Lacey Blvd, Hanford, CA 93230, the phone number is 582-3211 ex. 2662 or email [joe.wright@co.kings.ca.us](mailto:joe.wright@co.kings.ca.us).*