



**ANDREW
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VETERAN SUPPORT SERVICES

Understanding Military Discharge Characterizations and Your VA Benefit Eligibility

Overview:

Your discharge status plays a critical role in determining your eligibility for VA benefits. Many veterans with less-than-honorable discharges still qualify for select benefits-or may be eligible for a discharge upgrade or Character of Discharge (COD) review.

DISCHARGE TYPES & DEFINITIONS

1. HONORABLE

- Fully eligible for all VA benefits (health care, disability, education, home loan, burial, etc.)
- Indicates exemplary military service

2. GENERAL (UNDER HONORABLE CONDITIONS)

- Eligible for most VA benefits:

[Yes] Health care

[Yes] Disability compensation

[Yes] VA home loan

[Yes] Burial benefits

- [No] Not eligible for GI Bill (Post-9/11 or Montgomery)



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3. OTHER THAN HONORABLE (OTH)

- Not eligible for most benefits by default
- May qualify through a ****Character of Discharge (COD) review**** or ****discharge upgrade****
- Still potentially eligible for:
 - [Yes] VA health care for service-connected conditions
 - [Yes] Mental health services (especially for combat PTSD/MST)
 - [Yes] Some state veteran benefits

4. BAD CONDUCT

- Issued by a court-martial (not administrative)
- Generally not eligible for VA benefits
- Requires a successful COD review or discharge upgrade

5. DISHONORABLE

- Issued for serious crimes via court-martial
- [No] Ineligible for VA benefits

DISCHARGE UPGRADE PATHS



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You may request a ****Discharge Upgrade**** or ****Character of Discharge Review**** if:

- You have PTSD, TBI, or MST that contributed to your misconduct
- You received your discharge more than 15 years ago but believe it was unjust
- Your discharge was related to race, sexuality, or discrimination

HOW TO APPLY FOR AN UPGRADE:

- Submit VA Form ****DD-293**** (if within 15 years of discharge)
- Submit VA Form ****DD-149**** (if over 15 years ago)
- File with the appropriate military discharge review board (DRB or BCMR)

DOCUMENTS TO INCLUDE:

- [Yes] Medical or VA mental health records
- [Yes] Personal statement describing the event(s)
- [Yes] Character references or counselor letters
- [Yes] Disciplinary history or court-martial records (if applicable)

CHARACTER OF DISCHARGE REVIEW (VA)

Even if the military doesn't upgrade your discharge, the ****VA**** can still grant benefits through a ****COD review**** if:

- You served honorably during a specific period



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- Your offense was minor or linked to mental health conditions
- You fulfilled the obligation despite the discharge

HOW TO REQUEST A COD REVIEW:

- Submit your ****VA claim**** (e.g., Form 21-526EZ)
- VA will automatically begin a Character of Discharge review
- You may submit additional evidence supporting honorable service

SUMMARY CHART

Discharge Type	Eligible for VA Benefits?
Honorable	[Full Access] Full access
General (Honorable)	[Full Access] Most benefits, [No] GI Bill
Other Than Honorable	[Restricted] Most denied unless COD/upgrade approved
Bad Conduct	[No] Ineligible, unless upgraded
Dishonorable	[No] Ineligible

NEED HELP?

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We help veterans:

- Request discharge upgrades
- Navigate VA benefits eligibility
- File claims with supporting documentation