



News for U.S. Military Widows in Korea

1. VA Office at Yongsan Helps Widows

There is a VA office in Building 4037 on Yongsan South Post. It is across the parking lot from the Dragon Hill Lodge. If you receive a pension from the VA and you have problems, the VA office can help you. One of the people working there is Korean so you will have no problem explaining what you need.

2. Military Medical Care

There seems to be a misunderstanding about your eligibility to use military hospitals when you reach age 65. You can use military hospitals and pharmacies forever. The problem is with TRICARE. If you have to go to a civilian hospital, TRICARE will pay you up to 75% of what you paid. When you reach age 65, the only way you can continue to use TRICARE is by enrolling in Medicare Part B. Unfortunately, Medicare Part B is not available to Korean citizens living in Korea. If you are not a U.S. citizen, you cannot enroll in Medicare Part B. Therefore, you cannot continue to have TRICARE pay for your civilian hospital care.

Medicare Part B is health insurance for U.S. citizens and residents. The only way you can get this health insurance is to be a U.S. citizen or live in the U.S. for five years before you apply for the Medicare Part B. Even if you lived in the U.S. for five years or more and you are now living in Korea, you cannot get Medicare Part B. You must be living in the U.S. for at least five years when you apply for Medicare Part B.

3. Understanding Your Widow Benefits

As the widow of a U.S. serviceman, you are eligible to receive some type of pension. Some widows receive two or three different pensions. It is important for you to understand where your money comes from and why you receive it.

The most common type of pension is from the Department of Veterans Affairs, or VA. The VA provides two types of pension.

If your husband died on active duty, then you receive Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, or DIC. If your husband retired and died of an illness that started while he was on active duty, you can receive DIC. You must show the VA that your husband's death was service connected to military duty. The current DIC pension in 2004 is \$967 each month. This is a tax-free pension.

If your husband served in the military but his death was not service connected, you may be eligible for another type of VA pension. This is the widow's death pension. This pension is paid to widows who have no other income or very low income. Any other money you receive

replaces the widow's death pension. This pension in 2004 is \$552 each month and it is a tax-free pension.

When your husband retired from military service he had the option to take the Survivor Benefit Plan, or SBP. This pension comes from the Defense Finance and Accounting Service, DFAS. This is a type of insurance on your husband's military retired pay. If he enrolled in SBP when he retired, he would have to pay a premium each month because it is a type of insurance.

If your husband enrolled in SBP and you become eligible to receive DIC, the DIC replaces the SBP dollar for dollar. So you could receive only part of the SBP or none of the SBP if the DIC is more than the SBP. If you are a Korean citizen receiving SBP, you do not have to pay tax to the U.S. government on the SBP pension.

If the SBP pension is very low and you have no other income, it is possible to receive a partial widow's death pension from the VA. The total of SBP pension and partial widow's death pension cannot be more than the death pension alone.

The third type of pension is Social Security. As a widow you can start to receive Social Security widow's pension at age 60. The longer you wait to start receiving Social Security the more money you will receive.

If you are totally disabled and unable to work, you can receive a Social Security disability pension starting as early as age 50. You must submit medical records and doctor's letters to show that the disability is severe enough to keep you from being able to work.

For Korean citizens, the income tax on Social Security is 25.5%, and this cannot be refunded.

Widows who receive the VA widow's death pension must remember that any other income replaces part or the entire death pension. If you start to receive Social Security, it will replace the death pension dollar for dollar before the 25.5% tax is taken out of the Social Security pension. So you could receive less money if your Social Security pension is less than \$750 before the tax is deducted. If you do not notify the VA when your Social Security starts, you will receive a letter from the VA asking you to repay the widow's death pension payments you received when your Social Security pension started. A year or more may pass before you receive the letter from the VA, but you will receive the VA letter.

4. RAO Vacation

The Retiree Activities Office will be closed from July 26 until August 6 for summer vacation. If you have an urgent need that cannot wait, please call 017-477-1441.

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