

VA Home Improvement Grants Available to Veterans

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As you may have read in several of our previous articles or other publications, the Department of Veteran Affairs has programs in place that allow our Veterans who suffer from both service connected (SC) and non-service connected (NSC) disabilities to qualify for monthly income payments. Unbeknownst to most veterans or their families, however, the VA also has programs in place that provide Grants to both service connected and non-service connected disabled Veterans for improvements to their homes.

The remainder of this article will briefly describe the three programs offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs that give cash grants to qualified veterans with disabilities; the Specially Adapted Housing Grant (SAH), the Special Home Adaptation (SHA) Grant and the Home Improvements and Structural Assistance (HISA) Grant.

SAH and SHA are only available to Veterans with SC Disabilities. HISA, however, is available to both SC and NSC Veterans.

The primary function of these programs is to allow disabled Veterans to live as independently as possible. The Grants may be used for both safety improvements in a home the Veteran already occupies, or for new disability-accessible home construction.

Specially Adapted Housing Grant (SAH)

The Specially Adapted Housing Grant (SAH) provides up to \$67,555 to veterans injured in service so they can create a home that is fully accessible.

The SAH Grant is available for veterans who were disabled permanently and totally as a result of activities during wartime service (100 percent service-related disability). The majority of veterans who qualify are confined to a wheelchair and require modifications to existing house plans for wheelchair access.

This Grant may be used for new home construction or for substantial housing modifications that help eligible veterans function independently in their own homes.

Home Improvements and Structural Assistance (HISA)

The Home Improvements and Structural Assistance (HISA) program offers home improvement and modification grants of \$2,000 to \$6,800 for veterans with service-related *and* non-service-related disabilities respectively.

The HISA program is open to a wider range of veterans and includes those veterans who are disabled as a result of non-service-related conditions. The Grant monies may be used for any home improvement

necessary for the continuation of treatment or for the veteran's disability access to the home and to essential sanitary facilities.

In order to receive an HISA grant, the Veteran must have a prescription from a VA facility or from a physician providing covered care to VA patients outside of VA facilities.

Some of the provisions that HISA will pay for include:

- Lowering electrical outlets and switches
- Allowing entrance and exit from the Veteran's home
- Improving access to sanitary facilities
- Improving walkways and driveways and
- Improving access to kitchen and bathroom counters

A HISA grant is available to veterans who have received a medical determination indicating that improvements and structural alterations are necessary or appropriate for the effective and economical treatment of a disability. The HISA program does not cover major modifications that are generally covered by the SAH grant program. For instance, handrails installed in showers are covered under HISA, while widening a bathroom doorway is not.

A veteran may receive both a HISA grant and either a Special Home Adaptation (SHA) grant or a Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) grant.

Special Home Adaptation (SHA) Grant

The Special Home Adaptation (SHA) Grant can be used for any home improvement that will help veterans with service-connected disabilities increase mobility throughout their existing homes. Maximum grants are currently \$13,511 and are available to veterans who have permanent and total disability (blindness or loss of limbs) as a result of military service.

Summary

Applying for VA Grant money through the above programs does not require paid or professional assistance. We find, however, that when Veterans and their families are in the midst of a health crisis, the burden of understanding and executing applications such as these can be both overwhelming and confusing. Julian Gray Associates specializes in assisting Veterans with eldercare planning, and helping with the above applications is often just a small part of the comprehensive services we provide.