

CHAPTER 14
VETERANS TRUST FUND

801—14.1(35A) Purpose. These rules establish the requirements for veterans or their spouses or dependents to receive benefits from the veterans trust fund.

801—14.2(35A) Definition. For purposes of this chapter, “veteran” means the same as defined in Iowa Code section 35.1, or a resident of Iowa who served in the armed forces of the United States, completed a minimum aggregate of 90 days of active federal service, and was discharged under honorable conditions, or a former member of the national guard, reserve, or regular component of the armed forces of the United States who was honorably discharged due to injuries incurred while on active federal service that precluded completion of a minimum aggregate of 90 days of active federal service.

801—14.3(35A) Eligibility. Veterans, their spouses, and their dependents applying for benefits available under subrules 14.4(1) through 14.4(9) must meet the following threshold requirements.

14.3(1) Income. For the purposes of this chapter, an applicant’s household income, excluding VA pension benefits and service-connected disability income, shall not exceed 300 percent of the federal poverty guidelines for the number of family members living in the primary residence in effect on the date the application is received by the county director of veterans affairs. Federal poverty guidelines shall be those guidelines established by the Iowa department of human services for the veteran’s family size. The commission shall adjust the guidelines on July 1 of each year to reflect the most recent federal poverty guidelines.

14.3(2) Resources. The department may not pay benefits under this chapter if the available liquid assets of the veteran are in excess of \$15,000. For the purposes of this chapter, “available liquid assets” means cash on hand, cash in a checking or savings account, stocks, bonds, certificates of deposit, treasury bills, money market funds and other liquid investments owned individually or jointly by the applicant and the applicant’s spouse, unless the applicant and spouse are separated or are in the process of obtaining a divorce, but does not include funds deposited in IRAs, Keogh plans or deferred compensation plans, unless the veteran is eligible to withdraw such funds without incurring a penalty. Cash surrender value of life insurance policies, real property, established burial account, or a personal vehicle shall not be included as available liquid assets.

14.3(3) Funding from other sources. Applications shall not be approved if the applicant is eligible to receive aid from other sources to meet the purposes authorized in this chapter.

14.3(4) Additional requirements and limitations. Applicants must meet any additional requirements and are subject to any limitations which may be set out in this chapter or which may be established for a particular benefit.

801—14.4(35A) Benefits available. Applications may be approved for any of the following purposes.

14.4(1) Travel expenses for wounded veterans, and their spouses, directly related to follow-up medical care. Travel expenses under this subrule include the unreimbursed cost of airfare, lodging, and a per diem of \$25 per day for required out-of-state medical travel. Spouses may be reimbursed for in-state lodging and a per diem of \$25 per day when visiting a veteran who is in a hospital for medical care related to a service-connected disability. The veteran or the veteran’s spouse shall provide such evidence as the commission may require, which includes but is not limited to evidence the injury or disability is service-connected, the necessity of treatment in a particular facility, and documentation of expenses. The maximum amount for lodging reimbursement shall be \$90. The maximum amount of aid payable in a consecutive 12-month period under this subrule is \$1,000.

14.4(2) Job training or college tuition assistance for job retraining.

a. The commission may pay a veteran not more than \$3,000 for retraining or postsecondary education to enable the veteran to obtain gainful employment. The commission may provide aid under this subrule if all of the following apply:

(1) The veteran is enrolled in a training course in a technical college or school, is enrolled in an accredited postsecondary institution, or is engaged in a structured on-the-job training program.

(2) The veteran is unemployed, underemployed, or has received a notice of termination of employment.

(3) The commission determines that the veteran's proposed program, or current program, will provide retraining or initial training that could enable the veteran to find gainful employment. In making its determination, the commission shall consider whether the proposed program, or current program, provides adequate employment skills and is in an occupation for which favorable employment opportunities are anticipated.

(4) The veteran requesting aid has not received full reimbursement or payment from any other retraining or education scholarship programs and the veteran does not have other assets or income available to meet retraining or initial training expenses. Applicants requesting aid under this subrule will only be granted the unpaid portion of their tuition statement, and the payment will be made directly to the institution.

b. The veteran shall provide such evidence as the commission may require to satisfy the requirements of this subrule.

14.4(3) *Unemployment or underemployment assistance during a period of unemployment or underemployment due to prolonged physical or mental illness or disability resulting from military service.* The commission may provide subsistence payments only to a veteran who has suffered a loss of income due to prolonged physical or mental illness or disability resulting from military service. The commission may provide subsistence payments of up to \$500 per month of unemployment or underemployment to a veteran. No payment may be made under this subrule if the veteran has other assets or income available to meet basic subsistence needs. The veteran shall provide such evidence as the commission may require, which includes but is not limited to evidence that the mental illness or disability is service-connected and evidence that the veteran is unemployed or underemployed for the period of payments. To qualify as underemployed, the applicant must be currently working at an income that is below 300 percent of federal poverty guidelines due to limitations caused by the applicant's service-connected disability or illness. The maximum amount of aid payable in a consecutive 12-month period under this subrule is \$3,000 and a lifetime maximum of \$6,000.

14.4(4) *Expenses related to hearing care, dental care, vision care, or prescription drugs.*

a. The commission may provide health care aid to a veteran for dental care, including dentures; vision care, including eyeglass frames and lenses; hearing care, including hearing aids; and prescription drugs that are not covered by the Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

b. The maximum amount that may be paid under this subrule for any consecutive 12-month period may not exceed \$2,500 for dental care, \$500 for vision care, \$1,500 per ear for hearing care, and \$1,500 for prescription drugs.

c. The commission shall not provide health care aid under this subrule unless the aid recipient's health care provider agrees to accept, as full payment for the health care provided, the amount of the payment; the amount of the recipient's health insurance or other third-party payments, if any; and the amount that the commission determines the veteran is capable of paying. Payment under this subrule will be provided directly to the health care provider. The commission shall not pay health care aid under this subrule if the available liquid assets of the veteran are in excess of \$5,000.

d. Applicants for assistance under this subrule will be required to provide the commission with an unpaid bill for service or an estimated cost of service from the health care provider and documentation of the need for the service. For prescription drugs, the applicant must produce documentation of the need for the prescribed drug and documentation stating whether a generic drug is available or appropriate. The commission payment will not exceed an estimated cost of service by a health care provider.

14.4(5) *Expenses relating to the purchase of durable equipment or services to allow veterans to remain in their homes.*

a. The commission may make reimbursement payments to veterans for the purchase of durable equipment that allows the veterans to remain in their homes or allows them the ability to utilize more of their home.

b. Individuals requesting reimbursement under this subrule will be required to provide verification of the purchase and installation of the equipment and information relating to the need for the equipment. Individuals may also provide a product and installation cost estimate to the commission for approval, with the understanding that the commission will pay no more than the cost estimate to the supplier or installer. Applicants needing durable equipment as a medical necessity should provide information from a physician.

c. Assistance under this subrule cannot duplicate assistance from other entities, and the maximum amount that may be paid may not exceed \$2,500.

d. The commission shall not pay a reimbursement under this subrule if the available liquid assets of the veteran are in excess of \$5,000.

14.4(6) Individual counseling or family counseling programs.

a. The commission may make mental health, substance abuse, and family counseling available to veterans and their families. Individual family members are eligible for counseling.

b. The assistance may include appropriate counseling and treatment programs for veterans and their families in need of services.

c. Any assistance provided under this subrule shall not duplicate other services readily available to veterans and their families. Veterans who are eligible for VA mental health services must initially visit their nearest VA medical facility for initial consultation and continued psychiatric treatment. Payment under this subrule will be made for additional services for the veteran in a location closer to the veteran's home and at a greater frequency than the VA medical center can accommodate.

d. The commission may provide up to \$150 per hour and \$75 per half-hour for outpatient counseling visits to providers who will accept as full payment for the counseling services the amount provided. Counseling and substance abuse services provided in a group setting may be paid up to \$40 per hour. Counseling and substance abuse services may also be provided in an inpatient setting, subject to the maximum amount eligible under 14.4(6) "f."

e. The maximum amount that may be paid under this subrule for any consecutive 12-month period shall not exceed \$5,000. Individuals seeking counseling services are eligible for up to \$2,500, individuals seeking substance abuse treatment and counseling combined are eligible for up to \$3,500, and families seeking counseling services that may also include individual counseling and substance abuse services are eligible for up to \$5,000.

f. The commission may not provide counseling under this subrule unless the aid recipient's counseling service provider agrees to accept, as full payment for the counseling services provided, the amount of the payment; the amount of the recipient's health insurance or other third-party payments, if any; and the amount that the commission determines the veteran is capable of paying. The commission will make payment directly to the entity providing counseling and substance abuse services. The commission shall not pay for counseling under this subrule if the available liquid assets of the veteran are in excess of \$5,000.

14.4(7) Expenses relating to ambulance and emergency room services for veterans who are trauma patients.

a. The commission may provide assistance to veterans for expenses related to ambulance trips, including air ambulance transportation, and emergency room visits for trauma patients or VA healthcare patients that cannot indicate to emergency personnel that they are to be presented to a VA medical center.

b. Funding through this subrule shall be paid directly to the entity providing the emergency service or transportation after the commission is provided with an unpaid bill. All efforts should be made to utilize all other methods of payment prior to accessing assistance under this subrule.

c. The maximum amount that may be paid under this subrule may not exceed \$5,000.

14.4(8) Emergency expenses related to vehicle repair, housing repair, or temporary housing assistance.

a. The commission may provide assistance to veterans for emergency vehicle repair, emergency housing repair, and temporary housing.

b. Assistance for vehicle repair is limited to expenses that are required for continued use of the vehicle. This assistance will only be granted in cases where the vehicle is needed for travel to and

from work-related activities, the applicant is over the age of 65, or substantial hardship will occur if the vehicle is not repaired. Assistance may be provided in situations where the applicant does not have sufficient means to pay an insurance deductible. Assistance will be paid directly to the entity performing the maintenance or the insurance company owed the deductible. Assistance will not be provided for damage caused during the commission of a crime, for cosmetic needs, for damage resulting in an auto accident when automobile insurance has not been purchased, or for routine maintenance.

c. Assistance for home repair is limited to repairs that are required to improve the conditions and integrity of the home and are necessary for the safety and security of the residents. Applicants with homeowners insurance may request assistance for payment of a deductible. Assistance may be provided for applicants in disaster situations, home accidents, vandalism, or other situations as determined by the commission. In situations where a home is damaged beyond repair, assistance under this subrule is available to assist the applicant in purchasing a new home.

d. Assistance for transitional housing may be provided to applicants who are displaced from their home during a period of repairs related to a disaster, vandalism, home accident, or other reason that makes staying in the home hazardous to the health of the residents. Any refunded security deposits paid for under this subrule shall be returned to the Iowa veterans trust fund.

e. The maximum amount that may be paid under this subrule for any consecutive 12-month period may not exceed \$2,500 for vehicle repair, \$3,000 for housing repair, and \$1,000 for transitional housing.

f. The commission shall not pay a reimbursement under this subrule if the available liquid assets of the veteran are in excess of \$3,000.

14.4(9) *Expenses related to establishing whether a minor child is a dependent of a deceased veteran.*

a. The commission may provide assistance to the family of veterans who are killed while serving on active federal service, for expenses related to paternity or maternity tests or the cost of procuring additional DNA samples from the deceased veteran. This assistance is available to determine whether a child is eligible for United States Department of Veterans Affairs war orphan benefits.

b. Applicants are required to provide the results of the paternity or maternity exams to the commission upon completion of the tests. Where the deceased veteran is not the parent of the child, the applicant will be required to repay the assistance received as provided in 801—14.6(35A).

c. The maximum amount that may be paid under this subrule is \$2,500.

14.4(10) *Family support group programs or programs for children of members of the military.*

a. The commission may award grants to unit family readiness/support groups, family support offices, and other such organizations providing support and programs to families and children of family members.

b. The grant shall be only for projects or programs which are not funded from any other source. The commission shall determine if the applicant's proposed project or program will provide the intended support. In making its determination, the commission shall consider whether the proposed program will provide anticipated favorable results.

c. The maximum amount of aid payable in a consecutive 12-month period under this subrule to a family readiness/support group is \$500.

14.4(11) *Honor guard services.*

a. The commission may reimburse veterans organizations for providing military funeral honors as follows:

(1) If a single veterans organization provides basic honors, \$25.

(2) If a single veterans organization provides full honors, \$50.

(3) If two or more veterans organizations participate in providing full honors and one of the organizations provides a firing detail, \$50. The organizations may request that the commission split the reimbursement.

(4) If two or more veterans organizations participate in providing basic honors, \$25. Payment shall be to one veterans organization, as determined by the commission.

b. Notwithstanding paragraph "a," the commission shall not reimburse a veterans organization if federal funding is available to reimburse the veterans organization for providing military funeral honors. The veterans organization shall request reimbursement from federal sources. If a veterans organization

receives federal funding for providing military funeral honors at the reimbursement rate of one funeral per day, the department shall reimburse the organization for the provision of military funeral honors at any additional funerals on that day.

c. The maximum amount of aid payable in a consecutive 12-month period under this subrule to a veterans organization is \$500.

d. Veterans service organizations that are not currently providing honor guard services may apply for a \$500, up-front grant, for the use of creating a new honor guard within their organization. Applicants must present the commission with an estimated cost for purchasing uniforms and firearms for providing military honors and an estimated number of members who will be available to perform honor guard services. Organizations should also provide information regarding how they plan to pay for additional expenses that may occur outside of trust fund assistance. Applicants will be eligible for reimbursements under 14.4(11)“a” to “c” 12 months after the receipt of their original \$500 grant.

14.4(12) Matching funds to veterans service organizations to provide for accredited veteran service officers.

a. The commission may provide matching funds to veterans service organizations for maintaining accredited veteran service officers located at the Des Moines Veterans Affairs Regional Office.

b. Funding for all service organizations combined is available up to 20 percent of the interest and earnings on the trust fund balance during the fiscal year or \$150,000, whichever is less.

c. Service organizations requesting funding from the trust fund must provide financial data on the level of organizational funding for the staffing and operation of an office in the Des Moines Veterans Affairs Regional Office. Of the available amount outlined in this subrule, assistance will be split evenly among the service organizations eligible for the trust fund assistance. If the service organization’s expenditures are less than their share of the grant, the grant amount will be reduced to the amount of their previous fiscal year’s expenditures.

d. Service organizations will be required to maintain the same level of expenditures in the year they receive funding as in the previous year. Funding will be recaptured by the treasurer of the state of Iowa if this funding is used to supplant funding from an individual veterans service organization. Trust fund assistance will not be included in future fiscal year maintenance of effort requirements. A report on the previous fiscal year’s expenditures will be required to determine the maintenance of effort for the organization.

801—14.5(35A) Application procedure. Applications for benefits from the veterans trust fund may be obtained at any county veterans affairs office. The county director of veterans affairs shall date-stamp the application and submit it to the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs, Camp Dodge, Bldg. A6A, 7105 NW 70th Avenue, Johnston, Iowa 50131-1824.

14.5(1) Application process. A person who wishes to apply shall complete an Application for Veterans Trust Fund form and provide such documentation or other evidence as the commission may require in order to determine the awarding or denial of the benefits available under this chapter.

14.5(2) Date of application. The date of the application shall be the date the signed application and written verification are received by the county director of veterans affairs.

14.5(3) Eligibility determination.

a. The county director of veterans affairs or members of the county commission shall make a recommendation to the Iowa commission of veterans affairs as to whether to approve or deny the application. The Iowa commission of veterans affairs or a subcommittee appointed by the chair shall approve or deny all applications. Applications that are denied by the subcommittee will be forwarded to the Iowa commission of veterans affairs and will be processed at its quarterly meetings as set forth in 801—paragraph 1.2(2)“a” or during a conference call for the sole purpose of voting on a trust fund expenditure. Applications must be approved by a majority vote of the commission membership. The director of the Iowa department of veterans affairs shall notify an applicant within 15 days of the commission’s decision. An explanation of the reasons for rejection of an application will accompany denials.

b. Applications for honor guard reimbursements under subrule 14.4(11) shall be processed solely by the Iowa department of veterans affairs and do not need commission approval for expenditure of trust fund interest balance funds for this purpose.

14.5(4) *Waiting list.* After all veterans trust fund moneys have been obligated, the commission shall deny pending applications.

a. The denial notice shall state either that the applicant meets eligibility requirements but no funds are available and the applicant will be placed on the waiting list or that the applicant does not meet eligibility requirements.

b. Applicants not awarded funding who meet the eligibility requirements shall be placed on a statewide waiting list according to the order in which the completed applications and verification were received by the county commission of veteran affairs. In the event that more than one application is received at one time, the applicant shall be entered on the waiting list on the basis of the day of the month of the person's birthday, the lowest number being first on the waiting list. Any subsequent tie shall be decided by the month of birth, January being month one and the lowest number.

c. When funding allows additional applicants to be approved, their names shall be taken from the statewide waiting list, and their need and eligibility shall be redetermined at that time. An application packet, which includes instructions and necessary forms for verification of continuing eligibility, shall be sent to each applicant for completion. Packets shall be returned to the Iowa department of veterans affairs within time lines specified by the department. If the signed application and verification of continuing eligibility are not received by the time line specified by the department, the applicant shall not be considered for funding.

801—14.6(35A) Recovery of erroneous payments.

14.6(1) *Erroneous payments.* The commission may recover payments made as a grant under this chapter if any of the following apply:

a. The information provided by the applicant is inaccurate.

b. The commission incorrectly calculated the grant amount.

c. The applicant is not entitled to a grant or is entitled to a lower grant amount as a result of a change in circumstances that affects the applicant's eligibility to receive the grant.

14.6(2) *Amount of recovery.* The commission may recover only the portion of the grant to which the applicant would not have been entitled if the correct information had been provided or if the grant had been properly calculated or as a change in circumstances warrants.

14.6(3) *Remedies.* The commission may request repayment of the amount due under subrule 14.6(2). In lieu of a lump-sum payment, the commission may enter into an agreement under which the applicant may repay the amount due within a 12-month period. If the applicant fails to repay the amount due within 30 days of a request for repayment or fails to comply with the terms of a repayment agreement, the commission may offset future grants that the applicant may be entitled to under this chapter until the amount due has been recovered. The commission may also suspend other benefits available to the applicant until the amount due has been recovered.

14.6(4) *Waiver.* The commission may temporarily or permanently waive its authority to recover payments under subrule 14.6(1) or suspend benefits under subrule 14.6(3) if the applicant's household income is totally exempt from Iowa garnishment law.

14.6(5) *Appeal.* Any commission decision under this chapter is subject to appeal under rule 801—14.7(35A).

801—14.7(35A) Appeal rights.

14.7(1) *Final agency action.* The approval or denial of an application by the commission or the department shall be the final decision of the agency.

14.7(2) *Judicial review.* Judicial review of the commission's final decisions may be sought in accordance with Iowa Code section 17A.19.

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code section 35A.13 as amended by 2007 Iowa Acts, House File 817, section 7.

[Filed 10/4/07, Notice 8/1/07—published 10/24/07, effective 11/28/07]

[Filed emergency 7/9/08—published 7/30/08, effective 7/9/08]