

Access to U.S. DOW Installations for Eligible Veterans and Caregivers

Certain Veterans and designated caregivers registered with the Department of Veterans Affairs are eligible to access DOW installations in the 50 states, District of Columbia, Guam and Puerto Rico to obtain authorized benefits. All individuals seeking unescorted access to a DOW installation must establish their **identity** (through the presentation of an acceptable form of photo ID), their **fitness** (through an on-the-spot criminal records and terrorism check) and their **purpose**.

What is an Acceptable Purpose for Installation Access?

At installations with the relevant types of facilities, you can be granted access to obtain authorized benefits, such as:

- Medical appointments at VA or DOW medical facilities located on DOW installations
- Shopping at commissaries and exchanges
- Use of certain MWR facilities such as golf courses, bowling centers, recreational lodging, RV campgrounds and movie theaters

Who is Eligible for Benefits-Related Installation Access?

- Veterans enrolled in VA health care with a VA or DOW medical appointment located on the DOW installation
- Veterans with a service-connected disability
- Veterans awarded a Purple Heart
- Title 38 Prisoner of War determination
- Approved and designated primary family caregivers of an eligible veteran under VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (<https://www.caregiver.va.gov/>)

What Documentation Do I Need for Installation Access?

- An acceptable photo ID (VA-issued Veteran Health Identification Card or a REAL ID Act-compliant driver's license or non-driver's identification card), and
 - For Medical Appointments: An email or appointment reminder showing your appointment that day.
 - For Shopping & MWR Activities: No additional documentation required with the implementation of the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System data feed to the installation visitor centers. Also, see below: "Once on Base, What Documentation Is Needed to Shop at the Commissary, Exchange and authorized MWR Activities?"

How do I Enroll for Installation Access?

On your first visit to **each** DOW installation, you must stop at the installation visitor center to enroll for access.

STEP 1: Establish your identity by presenting your credential (VHIC or REAL ID).

If your VHIC doesn't have a barcode or cannot be scanned, you will need to get a new card from your local VA medical center before your card can be registered.

STEP 2: Establish your fitness by undergoing an on-the-spot criminal record and terrorism check.

Those with felony convictions, arrest warrants or other derogatory information related to criminal history or terrorism will not be granted access to the installation.

STEP 3: Establish your purpose.

If you are accessing the installation for health care, provide your proof of appointment. If you are accessing for shopping, DOW will electronically verify your purpose.

Once you complete these steps, the Visitor Center will enroll your credential for access for up to one year. For specifics on length of enrollment, please visit the link under “For More Information.”

Once I’ve Enrolled, How Do I Get on Base to Get Health Care or Use My Shopping or MWR Benefits?

STEP 1: Go directly to the installation gate and present the same VHIC or REAL ID you enrolled at the visitor center.

STEP 2: Present your VHIC or REAL ID and eligibility letter at the medical facility or at point of sale.

Can I escort guests onto the installation with me?

No, but your acceptable purpose will convey to guests traveling with you. Those guests must have an acceptable form of photo ID (such as a REAL ID-compliant driver’s license or non-driver’s identification card) and establish their own fitness.

If you are a guest accompanying an eligible veteran or caregiver:

- Accompanying guests must stop at the visitor center for access and are not authorized to use any services.
- Guests must follow the same three steps as veterans and caregivers (identity, fitness and purpose) but will generally not be allowed to enroll – access will generally be granted for the current visit only.

Once on Base, What Documentation Is Needed to Shop at the Commissary, Exchange and authorized MWR Activities?

- A VA-issued VHIC showing eligibility status (i.e., Purple Heart, former POW or service-connected disability). Point-of-sale transactions will not be granted if the eligibility status is not shown on the card.
- For Veterans who do not have a VHIC, you will need a VA-issued service-connected disability letter or VA Health Eligibility Center Form H623A (available at <https://www.va.gov/my-va/>) and your REAL ID Act-compliant driver’s license or non-driver’s identification card.
- For approved and designated primary family caregivers, you will need a VA-issued caregiver patronage letter and your REAL ID Act-compliant driver’s license or non-driver’s identification card.

How to Obtain a VHIC:



Veterans need to be enrolled in VA health care. If you’re not already enrolled, you can apply online, in person or by calling the VA at 877-222-8387. After registration, you can apply for a VHIC at a VA medical center or online at <https://www.va.gov/health-care/get-health-id-card/>.

NOTE: The VHIC is different from a Veteran ID Card.

For More Information:

For more information and frequently asked questions on the DOW policy allowing certain veterans and caregivers access to DOW installations visit <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/resources/millife-guides/mwr-programs/> and <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/benefits/commissaries-and-exchanges/>.