

Through a world-wide system of commissary stores, the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) provides Service members and their families with the opportunity to save on purchases of food and household products and services. Commissary goods are sold to authorized patrons at cost plus a 5% surcharge. Military families save an average of more than 30% on their purchases compared to commercial prices. These are savings that can be worth more than \$4,400 annually for a family of four that does all of its grocery shopping at the commissary.

The military exchanges are managed through three independent world-wide exchange systems: the Army and Air Force Exchange System (AAFES), the Navy Exchange Service Command (NEXCOM), and the Marine Corps Exchanges (MCX).

- » The military exchanges are vital to mission accomplishment. The exchanges have the dual mission of providing authorized patrons with merchandise and service, and of generating non-appropriated earnings as a source of funding for Morale, Welfare, and Recreation programs.
- » The exchanges offer the military community almost every imaginable retail merchandise and service found in mainstream shopping malls, convenience stores, gas stations, and fast food restaurants.
- » Exchanges operate retail complexes to support military communities on nearly every major military installation; through internet and catalog shopping; onboard ships at sea; in deployed locations and contingency operations; and at the site of humanitarian and disaster relief efforts.

INVOLUNTARY SEPARATION

Service members who are involuntarily separated from active duty during the period beginning on October 1, 2007, and ending on December 31, 2012, can continue to use commissary and exchange stores during the two-year period beginning on the date of the involuntary separation in the same manner as members on active duty.

USE OF REVENUE-GENERATING FACILITIES

Service members who, upon separation, will be entitled to a DD Form 2, "Armed Forces of the United States Geneva Convention Identification Card (Reserve)," and/or DD Form 1173-1, "Department of Defense Guard and Reserve Family Member Identification Card," are permitted to use Morale, Welfare, and Recreation revenue-generating facilities (e.g., clubs, bowling centers, golf courses, and more).

DOCUMENTS



Keep performance ratings, service-issued licenses or certifications; DD Form 2586, "Verification of Military Experience and Training" and other service documents (such as your security clearance) in a safe and permanent file. Never give away the original copy of any of these documents.

DD Form 214, "Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty"

This form is one of the most important documents you have because it is your key to participation in all VA programs as well as several state and federal programs. Keep your original in a safe, fireproof place and have certified photocopies available for reference. In most states, the DD Form 214 can be registered or recorded just like a land deed or other significant document.

If you choose not to register your DD Form 214, you still should take steps to protect it as you would any other sensitive document (will, marriage and birth certificates, insurance policies). You may wish to store it in a safe deposit box or at some other secure location. Your local Vet Center can certify your DD Form 214 and have a copy placed on file.

VA Papers

All VA forms and correspondence also should be kept in your file, including certificates of eligibility for loans, VA file number records, and other VA papers.

Family Records

Documents such as marriage licenses, birth and death certificates, and divorce and adoption papers are permanent records that should be kept in your permanent file.

Health Records

You and your family members should know the location of your health records, including medical history and individual immunization records. Keep a copy in a file at home, and know where the original is kept (usually in a military medical facility or doctor's office).

Insurance Documents

Insurance policies and premium payment records should be kept in your permanent file at home.

Wills

All Service members and their spouses should have a will. Once prepared by your local legal services office or through your own private attorney, it should be placed in a safe location with your other important documents.

Correction of Military Records

Each branch of military has its own procedures for correcting the military records of its members and former members. Correction of a military record may result in eligibility for VA and other benefits—such as back pay and military retirement—that the veteran (or survivors) could not otherwise retrieve. Generally, a request for correction must be filed within three years after the discovery of the alleged error or injustice.

If you believe there is an error in your military record, apply in writing to the appropriate Service using DD Form 149, "Application for Correction of Military or Naval Record," which can be submitted by the veteran, survivor, or a legal representative. Get a copy from any VA office listed in the local telephone directory.

How to Get a Review of Your Discharge

Each Service has its own discharge review board. These boards have the authority to change or correct any discharge or dismissal from the Service, unless it was the result of a general court martial. A discharge board has no authority to address medical discharges.



If you feel your discharge decision was not fair or did not consider all the facts in the case, you may request a discharge review. Use the DD Form 293, "Application for the Review of Discharge or Dismissal from the Armed Forces of the United States" obtainable from your nearest VA office. Written applications should be submitted by the veteran, next of kin, or a legal representative. Application must be made within 15 years after discharge.