

Guide to Understanding an Applicant's DD-214 for VVA Membership Eligibility

Why is a DD-214 important?

The Report of Separation contains information normally needed to verify military service for benefits, retirement, employment, and membership in veterans' organizations. Information shown on the Report of Separation may include the service member's:

- Date and place of entry into active duty
- Home address at time of entry
- Date and place of release from active duty
- Last duty assignment and rank
- Military job specialty
- Military education
- Decorations, medals, badges, citations, and campaign awards
- Total creditable service
- Total prior active service
- Total prior inactive service
- Foreign service credited
- Separation information (type of separation, character of service, authority and reason for separation, separation and reenlistment eligibility codes)

Who is eligible for VVA membership?

The veteran must have served on active duty for more than 180 days (i.e., for other than training purposes) in a branch of the U.S. armed forces. The term "training purposes" means active duty for training ("ACDUTRA") in a Reserve or Guard component, or initial training (e.g., boot camp) in an active component. Evidence of **greater than 180 days of active service** (as shown on the "Total Active Service" or "Net Active Service This Period" line of the DD Form 214 generally qualifies the applicant for membership. Applicants with less than 180 days of active service, who were separated due to a service-connected disability, are eligible for membership. The VVA National Board passed Motion 25 at the April 2003 meeting.

The veteran must have served in the Republic of Vietnam ("in-country" service) between February 28, 1961 and May 7, 1975. Service in the Republic of Vietnam ("in-country service) is indicated by award of the.

Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (AFEM) - Vietnam: July 1, 1958 to July 3, 1965 or Vietnam: April 29, 1975 to April 30, 1975 **or**
Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal (VCM) – March 1, 1961 to March 28, 1973 **or**
Vietnam Service Medal (VSM) – July 4, 1965 to March 28, 1973

The veteran must have served in any duty location between August 5, 1964 and May 7, 1975.

If the entry date of service is on or before May 7, 1975 and the period of service is continuous (greater than 180 days of active service) from the date of entry. **The veteran is eligible for membership the majority of the time and there could be exceptions.**

What is the key information you are seeking when reviewing an applicant's DD-214?

Below is one version of a DD-214 as an example and there are different areas numbered in **"bold red"** which may provide key information to prove whether the veteran is eligible for membership.

THIS IS AN IMPORTANT RECORD SAFEGUARD IT.

PERSONAL DATA	1. LAST NAME-FIRST NAME MIDDLE NAME 1		2. SERVICE NUMBER		3. SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER 2		
	4. DEPARTMENT, COMPONENT AND BRANCH OR CLASS ARMY RA SIG 3			5a. GRADE, RATE OR RANK SP4 4	6. PAY GRADE E-4	7. DATE OF RANK DAY MONTH YEAR 29 OCT 69	8. DATE OF BIRTH DAY MONTH YEAR 5 JUN 48 5
	7. U. S. CITIZEN <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO		8. PLACE OF BIRTH (City and State or Country) TEXAS		9. DATE OF BIRTH DAY MONTH YEAR 5 JUN 48		
SELECTIVE SERVICE DATA	10a. SELECTIVE SERVICE NUMBER		11. SELECTIVE SERVICE LOCAL BOARD NUMBER, CITY, COUNTY, STATE AND ZIP CODE			12. DATE INDUCTED DAY MONTH YEAR NA	
TRANSFER OR DISCHARGE DATA	11a. TYPE OF TRANSFER OR DISCHARGE TRF TO USAR (SEE 16)		12. STATION OR INSTALLATION AT WHICH EFFECTED FT DIX NJ				
	13. REASON AND AUTHORITY AR 635-200 SPN 411 EARLY SEP FR OS				14. EFFECTIVE DATE DAY MONTH YEAR 31 MAR 70 6		
	12. LAST DUTY ASSIGNMENT AND MAJOR COMMAND SVC BTRY 2D BN 6TH ARTY USAREUR		13a. CHARACTER OF SERVICE HONORABLE		14. TYPE OF CERTIFICATE ISSUED NONE		
SERVICE DATA	14. DISTRICT, AREA COMMAND OR CORPS TO WHICH RESERVIST TRANSFERRED TRF TO USAR COW GP (REINF) USAAC ST LOUIS MO		15. REENLISTMENT CODE RE-1		16. TERM OF SERVICE DAY MONTH YEAR 3 11 APR 67 8		
	15. TERMINAL DATE OF RESERVE LIMITS OBLIGATION DAY MONTH YEAR 10 APR 73 7		17. CURRENT ACTIVE SERVICE OTHER THAN BY INDUCTION a. SOURCE OF ENTRY: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNENLISTED (First Enlistment) <input type="checkbox"/> ENLISTED (Prior Service) <input type="checkbox"/> REENLISTED <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER		18. DATE OF ENTRY DAY MONTH YEAR 3 11 APR 67		
	18. PRIOR REGULAR EMPLOYMENTS NONE 9		19. GRADE, RATE OR RANK AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO CURRENT ACTIVE SVC PV-1		20. PLACE OF ENTRY INTO CURRENT ACTIVE SERVICE (City and State) SPOKANE WASHINGTON		
	21. HOME OF RECORD AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE (Street, RFD, City, County, State and ZIP Code)		22. STATEMENT OF SERVICE		23. YEARS MONTHS DAYS		
	23a. SPECIALTY NUMBER & TITLE 36K20 WIREMAN		23b. RELATED CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND D.O.T. NUMBER 829.281 WIREMAN MAINT		24. NET SERVICE THIS PERIOD 2 11 20		
24. DECORATIONS, MEDALS, BADGES, COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND CAMPAIGN NUMBERS AWARDED OR AUTHORIZED GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL NATIONAL DEFENSE SERVICE MEDAL VIETNAM SERVICE MEDAL SHARPSHOOTER M-14 SHARPSHOOTER M-16 11		25. EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMPLETED ATP 21-114 CODE OF COND C B R TNG RVN TNG WIREMAN 8 WKS 67 12		26. TOTAL ACTIVE SERVICE 2 11 20			
VA AND EMP. SERVICE DATA	26a. NON-PAY PERIODS TIME LOST (Within This Year) NA		27. DAYS ACCRUED LEAVE PAID NA		28. AMOUNT OF ALLOTMENT NA		
	28. VA CLAIM NUMBER NA		29. SERVICEMEN'S GROUP LIFE INSURANCE COVERAGE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> \$10,000 <input type="checkbox"/> \$5,000 <input type="checkbox"/> NONE				
REMARKS	30. REMARKS BLOOD GP 0 8 YRS ELEM (GEN) USARPAC VIETNAM 22 OCT 67 - 20 OCT 68 USAREUR GERMANY 3 JUN 69 - 5 APR 70 13						
AUTHENTICATION	31. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES AFTER TRANSFER OR DISCHARGE (Street, RFD, City, County, State and ZIP Code)			32. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING TRANSFERRED OR DISCHARGED			
	33. TYPED NAME, GRADE AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZING OFFICER CPT FA ASST CHIEF ENL BRANCH			34. SIGNATURE OF OFFICER AUTHORIZED TO SIGN 14			

DD FORM 214 1 JUL 66 PREVIOUS EDITIONS OF THIS FORM ARE OBSOLETE EFFECTIVE 1 JAN 67 GPO: 1969-351-112 ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES REPORT OF TRANSFER OR DISCHARGE **2**

Numbered items on DD-214

1. Name: make sure the name matches the name on the membership application and in the case of a name change, further official documents will need to be provided by the veteran to substantiate the difference.

2. Social Security Number: if the veteran becomes a member, the file copy of the document should have the SSN blackened out and this is to protect the individual's privacy.

3. Armed Forces Components:

Army – (Active) USA; (Reserve) AUS or USAR; and (National Guard) ARNG or ARNGUS

Air Force – (Active) USAF; (Reserve) USAFR; and (National Guard) ANG or ANGUS

Navy – (Active) USN; and (Reserve) USNR

Marine Corps – (Active) USMC; and (Reserve) USMCR

Coast Guard – (Active) USCG; and (Reserve) USCGR

4. Grade, Rate or Rank: pay grade at the time of discharge.

5. Date of Birth: veteran should be 50 years old or older.

6. Effective Date: date of discharge.

7. Terminal Date of Reserve Obligation: date of completion of Reserve time.

8. Date of Entry: date veteran entered military service.

9. Prior Regular Enlistments: any prior military service.

10. Statement of Service: this is a breakdown of the veteran's military service as to this document, military retirees can have multiple DD-214s and this is a key item of interest to determine membership eligibility. Unfortunately, the majority of DD-214s do not list the prior service dates and that information is located in the veteran's 201 file. The actual date(s) of prior active or inactive (Reserve or Guard) military service can be a problem in certain cases when determining whether the veteran's military service falls within the VVA membership eligibility dates. Assumptions of eligibility based on total prior military service (years, months & days) can be misleading even if the timeframe seems to fit and further proof is necessary to be sure of the veteran's eligibility.

11. Decorations, Medals, Badges, Citations, and Campaign Awards: The Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal or the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal and the Vietnam Service Medal are key items of interest to determine membership eligibility.

12. Education and Training Completed: in most cases you can't determine that the veteran served on active duty for more than 180 days (i.e., for other than training

purposes) in a branch of the U.S. armed forces from this section and further proof is necessary to resolve any membership eligibility question.

13. Remarks: should not be used to determine membership eligibility.

14. Typed Name, Grade and Title of Authorizing Officer: document should be signed.

What information or lack thereof should be considered as a “red flag” that there may be a problem with the proof of membership eligibility submitted by the veteran?

- 1. My records were destroyed in the fire.** On July 12, 1973, a disastrous fire at the NPRC destroyed approximately 16-18 million Official Military Personnel Files. The affected record collection included: U.S. Army personnel discharged November 1, 1912, to January 1, 1960. Estimated loss 80%; U.S. Air Force personnel discharged September 25, 1947, to January 1, 1964, with names alphabetically after Hubbard, James E. Estimated loss 75%; Some U.S. Army Reserve personnel who received final discharge as late as 1964; A very small number of U.S. Navy, United States Coast Guard, and U.S. Marine Corps records which were out of file and were caught in the section of the building which experienced the most damage in the fire. No duplicate copies of the records that were destroyed in the fire were maintained, nor was a microfilm copy ever produced. There were no indexes created prior to the fire. In addition, millions of documents had been lent to the Department of Veterans Affairs before the fire occurred. Therefore, a complete listing of the records that were lost is not available. Nevertheless, there are many alternate sources that a qualified researcher can access in an effort to reconstruct basic service information. They, then, can have the Records Center issue a replacement known as a “Certificate of Service.” A Certificate of Service usually takes a couple of weeks to be processed by the NPRC when there is no DD214 in your file, and when supporting documents can be found. Many NPRC reconstructions can take longer, possibly months.
- 2. Veteran has limited or vague proof of military service and the veteran states to have submitted for or will provide a copy of their DD-214 ASAP.** This is a frequent problem at the Chapter level. In these cases a favorable relationship has been established with the veteran and regardless of branch of service, rank or retiree status claimed by the veteran, the veteran’s membership should not be submitted for processing without proper proof of eligibility. Other documentation (such as a discharge certificate, orders or awards) may be accepted if a DD-214 is not available. The DD-214 is kept in the chapter files for individual members (IND). For life members (LMT or LMP), incarcerated members (IVI), and permanently hospitalized (PHV) members, a copy of the DD-214 must be submitted to the national office.
- 3. Veteran refuses to sign an SF 180 to verify document submitted for proof of VVA membership eligibility.** VVA National BOD June 1990 Motion #23: To

authorize the Chapters when there is a question on the authenticity of documents presented by an individual that they have the authority to demand the signing of a SF-180 (request for military records) and without that signature the person will not be considered for full membership.

4. **When any document submitted for proof of VVA membership eligibility appears to be altered in any manner or the document is unreadable the membership should not be submitted for processing.** If there are questions as to the validity of a document, then the document should not be submitted for membership processing and you should make the veteran aware of the problem.

5. **VVA National, a State Council or a Chapter can require that an SF-180 Form be signed by an individual already a member of VVA.** Yes, the process can be initiated by following the procedure in the VVA Code of Disciplinary Policy & Procedures, Section IX – Procedures for Fraudulent or Altered Proof of Service, paragraph A: In order to preserve the integrity of Vietnam Veterans of America, and its membership, this mechanism will be used to address fraudulent or altered DD Form 214/215's, or other proofs of service, used to obtain membership in VVA, or used after membership has been obtained, that causes discredit to VVA.

If there is any question about the DD-214 or other documentation submitted as proof of eligibility who should we contact?

You can contact the VVA Membership Department or the VVA Membership Affairs Committee with your questions or concerns and they will be resolved in a timely manner.