

Who is Eligible for Expanded Commissary, Exchange, and MWR Benefits?

In addition to those who were already eligible, the DoD is expanding [Commissary](#), [Exchange](#), and [Morale, Welfare and Recreation \(MWR\)](#) retail eligibility to:

- Purple Heart recipients
- Former Prisoners of War (POWs)
- All veterans with service-connected disabilities
- Approved PCAF Caregivers*

*Approved caregivers are individuals who have been approved and designated as the primary family caregivers of eligible veterans under the Department of Veterans Affairs Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers. You can [learn more about this program at the VA website](#).

What Access Does this Cover?

Those who are eligible for base access under these new rules will be eligible to access the following facilities starting Jan. 1, 2020:

- Commissaries*
- Military Service Exchanges
- Select MWR Retail Facilities

Some examples of the MWR Retail activities include entertainment, clubs, recreational lodging/resorts, special interest activities, bowling, golf, restaurants, marinas, equipment rental, movie theaters, vehicle storage, kennels, recreational lodging, RV campgrounds, [AmericanForcesTravel.com](https://www.AmericanForcesTravel.com) and more.

Use of MWR activities primarily funded by appropriations and child development programs are not authorized under this program.

***Note About Commissary Access:** The DoD is required to charge a small fee to new users who are eligible solely under the Purple Heart and Disabled Veterans Equal Access Act of 2018, to cover any increase in costs to the U.S. Treasury for processing commercial [credit and debit cards](#).

Which Forms of ID Are Required for Base

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Which Forms of ID Are Required for Base Access?

The DoD recently announced the rules for how newly eligible veterans and caregivers will be able to gain base access to take advantage of the Commissary, Exchange, and MWR facilities.

Veterans with a service-connected disability will need a [Veterans Health Identification Card, or VHIC](#), to be able to gain access to the bases and use these facilities. The VHIC must state the veteran's eligibility. For example, the card must have a designation for Purple Heart, Former POW, or Service Connected rating. This is indicated on the card itself.

The new [Veterans ID Card, or VIC](#), is not an authorized form of ID for this program and will not work for base access. Only the VHIC qualifies as an authorized form of ID.

Primary Family Caregivers must have an eligibility letter from VA's Office of Community Care.

Veteran Eligibility – Purple Heart, POW, or Service-Connected Disability Rating

Under the current rules, veterans will only be allowed to access the base if they have the Veterans Healthcare Identification Card. Those who do not have a VHIC or are ineligible for a VHIC will not be able to access DoD and Coast Guard installations.

However, they would still be eligible to use the online Exchanges, [which opened up eligibility to all veterans in 2018](#).

Caregiver Eligibility

According to the VA, the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) is only available to veterans who were seriously injured in the line of duty on or after September 11, 2001. The VA has plans to expand the PCAFC program to veterans from other eras in the near future. [You can learn more here](#).

Enhanced services for eligible participants may include a financial stipend, access to [health care insurance](#), mental health services and counseling, caregiver training, and respite care.

The VA has more information on [which veterans qualify under this program](#).

The VA also has a [Caregiver Eligibility Check questionnaire](#) which helps caregivers understand if they may be eligible for this PCAFC program.

Caregivers who meet the eligibility criteria should download [VA Form 10-10CG](#) (PDF) and send in their application.

PCAFC Caregivers – VA Letter of Eligibility

Only caregivers for veterans who qualify for this program are eligible to access the base facilities.

- Caregivers will be issued an eligibility letter by the VA's Office of Community Care. Contact your local VA healthcare facility for more information on the PCAFC letter, or call 1-877-733-7927.

In addition to the letter from the VA, caregivers must have a personal photo ID to access the military installation. These can include any of the following:

- REAL ID-compliant driver's license or ID card issued by a State, territory, possession, or the District of Columbia
- Enhanced driver's license issued by a State, territory, possession, or the District of Columbia
- DoD Common Access Card (CAC)
- DoD uniformed services identification card
- U.S. passport or passport card
- Federal personal identity verification card (when otherwise eligible)
- Transportation Worker ID Card
- Foreign passport bearing an unexpired immigrant or non-immigrant visa or entry stamp

Accessing Military Installations for the First Time Under These New Rules

The DoD has announced that there will be special procedures for veterans and caregivers accessing military installations for the first time under these new rules.

What if I am Eligible but Don't Have a VHIC?

When this program launches on Jan. 1, 2020, only veterans with a secure, scannable VA-issued VHIC will be authorized access to in-person Commissary, Military Exchange, and MWR privileges on DoD and Coast Guard installations.

The DoD and VA are seeking a credentialing solution for all Veterans eligible under the Purple Heart and Disabled Veterans Equal Access Act of 2018. The DoD will announce a solution when they have identified the best way to proceed.

Are Family Members Eligible?

These [benefits are only extended to the veteran](#) and/or the caregiver. These benefits do not apply to the veteran's family members or dependents. It may be possible to sponsor family members onto the military installation. However, they will not be able to access these facilities or use these amenities without the eligible veteran. Family members who are sponsored onto the base must have a valid form of ID and may be required to go through a quick background check prior to being permitted access to the military installation.

Does This Access Extend to Overseas Locations?

Veterans and Caregivers will be able to use this benefit at military installations located in the United States and its territories and possessions. However, access cannot be guaranteed at all overseas locations due to status of forces agreements, local laws and other agreements with host countries.