



Gold Star Wives of America, Inc

Mental Health Death Claim Issues March 2024

Surviving families of Veterans who die due to mental health issues, and in which the death is considered service connected resulting in the family receiving DIC benefits, should be awarded any and all other benefits which other Surviving families of any other service connected death receive.

- Surviving spouse and eligible children of deceased active-duty members, retired military members, Medal of Honor recipients, and 100% disabled Veterans are eligible for military IDs. Surviving dependents of deceased reserve members, National Guard members, retired reserve members not yet age 60, and former members not receiving retired pay may also be eligible for an ID card."
- Regulations allow the 100% surviving spouse. [See page](#) 30 of the DODM (PAGE 30)
- All living disabled Veterans can have access base privileges through the VHAC (Veteran VA ID CARD) and their spouses under the caregiver program. Spouses can keep their ID after death if rated 100%.
- Service-connected survivors of Veterans with less than 100% cannot get a base access privilege ID card.
- Not having this card impacts survivors by preventing them from attending service community events, accessing cheaper goods and services, and, in some cases, getting a VA account.
- The rating of a Veteran who dies due to service-connected cannot be raised without an open claim at the time of death.
- A rating of less than 100% rating impacts ability for survivors to access health care.
- Those surviving families who receive DIC, although the Veteran had less than a 100% rating are all due to mental health deaths. For other deaths, the approval of DIC is dependent simply upon the death being considered "service connected". Only mental health deaths are treated differently.

Questions and data needed

- How many service-connected spouses have a veteran who passed without a 100% VA disability rating?
- How many service-connected veterans rated under 100% at the VA contributed to mental health? (substance abuse, PTSD, etc.)
- We need to reach out to these survivors to understand what is happening and what they believe could have been done to prevent the death.