



## TULARE COUNTY HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

Cheryl L. Duerksen, Ph.D. • Agency Director

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Veterans Services Officer: Ken Cruickshank, 559-684-4960

Email: [KCruicks@tularehhsa.org](mailto:KCruicks@tularehhsa.org)

### VETERANS CORNER

In an earlier column, I brought your attention to AB 935 that allows the addition of the word “VETERAN” to be on California-issued DMV licenses or identification cards. It can be difficult for veterans to prove their military service. The only federally issued military ID cards are retiree ID cards; the VA only issues a limited number of Veterans Identification Cards.

Veterans ineligible for one of the ID cards often have difficulty proving their years of military service. As a veteran living in California, AB 935 may entitle you to the new benefit, but you may need to begin preparations now.

Under existing law, when the DMV determines that an applicant is lawfully entitled to a driver’s license, the department is required to issue a license to the applicant. Existing law specifies the contents of drivers’ licenses, and requires the application for drivers’ licenses or identification cards to contain a space for applicants to indicate his or her military service, and to give his or her consent to be contacted regarding eligibility to receive state or federal veterans benefits.

Starting November 12, 2015, the bill also requires the application to allow a person to present a form signed by the County Veteran Service Office certifying that the person applying is a veteran of the active armed forces, and requires that service be under conditions other than dishonorable. With no exceptions, every veteran will be required to provide either a certified or original copy of their Report of Separation or DD-214 (if you don’t have a certified or original copy, contact this office so we can help you get one; it can take up to four to six weeks for you to receive it). The bill would require the DMV to allow an applicant to present that verification form, and the DMV would be required to print “VETERAN” on the face of a driver’s license or identification card issued to a person who makes the request and presents the required form. The form will be available in the County Veteran Service Office on November 1, 2015. We will verify the required information and sign the form for you to take to the DMV, but the designation is not available until November 12, 2015.

*Ken Cruickshank, the Veterans Services Officer for Tulare County, is a retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer. The Veterans Services Office is located at 205 North L Street in Tulare.*



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The DMV will charge a one-time fee of \$5.00 to add the designation to the card; after that, it will appear on subsequent renewals at no cost. You will also be required to pay any normal DMV fees for the issuance of the license or ID card.

Having the designation on the cards will improve veterans' access to resources, benefits, and services. At the County Veterans Services Office, we can assist veterans and their dependents in obtaining and identifying benefits and services available.

In order to have the VETERAN designation on your driver's license, your service should have been honorable or general; cases with "Other than Honorable" or "Bad Conduct Discharge" will require an administrative determination by the US Department of Veteran Affairs, known as a Character of Discharge Determination (COD). The VA determines this when a veteran applies for VA benefits (such as health care or service connected disability compensation). If the VA makes a favorable COD determination, they issue a letter explaining eligibility for VA health care and/or monetary benefits. If you have an OTH (Other Than Honorable) or BCD (Bad Conduct Discharge), you can seek benefits through your County Veteran Service Office, as you may ultimately be eligible based on the unique circumstances of your case. Until the VA makes this determination, you will not be eligible for the VETERAN designation on your license or ID card. For other "uncharacterized" reasons for separation from the military, situations vary; if you were discharged under dishonorable conditions, you are ineligible for the designation.

The eligibility criteria for National Guard or Reserve members includes mobilization for federal Active duty (other than initial active duty for training/boot camp), but you still need to present your DD-214 for the period of active duty.

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