

A Trusted Resource and a Commitment to Service

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Nancy Ortiz-Rodriguez, National Pre-Discharge Claims Representative at Fort Drum, N.Y., finds satisfaction in knowing she's helping veterans have a better life, one veteran at a time.

In her role with the VFW National Veterans Service, Nancy ensures separating and retiring active-duty military personnel receive the assistance they need to obtain their VA entitlements and benefits. She enjoys guiding service members through information on topics ranging from medical claims to education to VA home loans.

For Nancy, dedication to her job and to veterans comes naturally because the military has always been a part of her life. Her father served in Vietnam and her brother and sister both served in the Army. When Nancy was looking to further her education and expand her career options, she enlisted and served for eight years including a deployment to Iraq. She believes this makes her a trusted resource for fellow veterans.

"As a veteran myself, I understand that sometimes it can be difficult to transition to civilian life and navigate the VA system. Applying for benefits can be daunting and confusing. Some veterans can feel alone in a process they do not understand," Nancy said. "By helping and listening, I am recognizing their sacrifice and service. By assisting with their benefits and explaining the process I am also helping alleviate their anxiety."

Keeping up with the laws and regulations governing the VA disability claims process demands constant learning. And for Nancy, a 44-year-old single mom with three teenagers, it requires some serious time management. With much of her family still in Puerto Rico where Nancy is from, her personal support network is far away. She's ready to meet any challenge though — and is proud of raising her children, providing them with good educations and committing to a life of service.

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“After serving in the Air Force, I worked at the San Juan Military Entrance Processing Station in Puerto Rico. Once I moved to Fort Drum, I wanted to continue serving and helping service members and veterans. This position with the VFW has given me the opportunity to do that,” said Nancy. “I want to meet our veteran’s expectations and exceed those expectations in a productive and constructive way.”

Nancy is a member of VFW Post 7227 in Carthage, N.Y., and knows how valuable it is for service members and their families to have someone explain options and help navigate the VA system. She has received thank you notes from veterans who appreciate a listening ear and connecting with someone who truly cares.

While Nancy mostly works with those transitioning out of the military, she’s also been able to help retirees with issues such as Concurrent Retirement Disability Pay (CRDP).

“I assisted a veteran who retired about 10 years ago with a rating of less than 50 percent, so he was not eligible for CRDP. We filed an increase for his VA rating, which he was granted, and now he is receiving both his full retirement pay and full VA compensation,” Nancy said. “He was very appreciative, and I felt valued and assured that this is the reason I do this job.”