

No Need To Do It Alone

Vietnam vet Bill Smith contacted a VFW Service Officer after learning quickly how difficult — and costly — it can be to navigate the VA system alone

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At 19, Bill Smith volunteered for the draft. Not wanting to serve as an infantry soldier, he signed up for aircraft electrician school.

After a brief stint at Fort Lewis in Washington, Smith was deployed to Vietnam in 1969. During his time there, he was exposed to Agent Orange.

Today, living in Fairview, Oregon, with his wife Maria, Smith (now 71) suffers from diabetes and neuropathy, which he attributes to the chemical agent.

Changes like improving his diet and exercising more frequently help Smith manage his health conditions. For additional assistance, he began the application process to receive benefits from the VA. He learned quickly how difficult — and costly — it can be to navigate the system alone.

“Be prepared for confusion,” he said. “Using the wrong forms cost me a couple thousand dollars.”

After doing it alone, Smith contacted VFW Service Officer David Lowe for help, and today he has a 30% disability rating.

“David has been very helpful,” said Smith. “I would not be receiving benefits if I hadn’t gotten in touch with him.”

[Learn more about the VFW's National Veterans Service \(NVS\) program.](#)

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