



Upgrading a discharge is a complicated and lengthy process. Often the difference between success and failure is how you present your case to the board.

For that reason, the best option is to obtain help from people that are experienced framing issues that will maximize the odds of success.

Veterans Law Clinic

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VETERANS LAW CLINIC

**UPGRADING YOUR
MILITARY DISCHARGE**



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DISCHARGE UPGRADE STEPS

STEP 1: LOCATE AND RETRIEVE MILITARY RECORDS AND ANY OTHER EVIDENCE

Before starting the discharge review process, it is important to locate and retrieve all military and medical records. This process can be time consuming but it can make the difference between success and failure.

Regardless of branch, military personnel and medical records are requested by filling out and submitting an SF Form 180. The form can be found online through an internet search and has easy to follow instructions.

Often personnel records are missing documents that may be in your possession such as certificates of achievement, award and medal certificates. If you still have them include copies with your discharge review application.

Obtain copies of any civilian medical treatment if you have a medical issue and believe it played a role in your discharge.

No document is unimportant; include everything and anything you can find that reflects positively on your military service.

Obtain letters of recommendation from any and all possible sources that know you personally (friends, family, employers, coworkers, teachers, community leaders etc.)

STEP 2: CHOOSING THE CORRECT BOARD

If your discharge was within the last 15 years, and was not the result of a general court martial you are eligible to apply to your specific branch's discharge review board.

Your application can either be considered through a records review or with a personal appearance.

YOU MUST DO RECORDS REVIEW FIRST. A records review first ensures that you can later choose to personally appear before the board.

The application can be found online and consists of a DD Form 293.

If you were discharged over 15 years ago or as the result of a general court martial you are not eligible to have your discharge reviewed. However, each branch has a Board for the Correction of Military/Naval Records. You must apply to this board, using DD Form 149, within 3 years of discovering the existence of the board.

STEP 3: SUCCESS DEPENDS ON YOUR ISSUES

The discharge review boards decide upgrade cases on issues of propriety (did the military screw up the discharge process?) or equity (was the discharge fair?)

The narrative reason for separation will point you to your branch's policies and procedures for your discharge. Read the regulations and try to identify a mistake made by your chain of command in the discharge upgrade process. If you identify a mistake, you must include evidence. The burden is on you to show that there was a mistake!

Fairness issues should include that your discharge was too harsh based on length of service, combat service, awards, etc.

Depending on the reason and date of your discharge, it is often a good idea to wait at least 5 years before you begin the process. This allows you to demonstrate to the board that your discharge was not reflective of your character. Post service accomplishments are extremely important.

Starting or continuing education, a stable work history, volunteering in the community are considered in the discharge review process.

The review boards cannot change reenlistment codes. RE codes are tied to the narrative reason for separation. If the narrative reason for separation is changed, the RE code will change with it (if applicable).