

If the veteran was a resident of Lackawanna County please contact the recorder of deeds office, and the Veterans Affairs office. If neither office has it see the information below.

Here's all the information that you will need to get a copy of your DD214. We'll explain the various options that you have based on the timeframe that *you* have set within which to acquire your DD214. We'll discuss free services where time is not a consideration and you can afford to wait weeks or even months, to paid researcher services when you need to have a copy of your DD214 in-hand today. We'll also mention the services that you should avoid.

In essence, the "best method for you to acquire your DD214" is entirely dependent on your personal situation, with the primary consideration being the *time* that you can afford to wait. Ask yourself, "By what date do I absolutely, positively have to have my DD214?" Your answer to this question will dictate the best method *for you to use* in order to acquire your DD214.

There are just three (3) methods to acquire either your DD214 and/or your complete personnel file (known as your 201 File). They are:

Method	Time Required
1. Free DD214 Record Retrieval	Several Weeks to Several Months
2. Hire "Someone Else" to apply for your DD214	Several Weeks to Several Months
3. Hire a research company to get your DD214	Same Day, Next Day to One Week (or longer) but quality, speed, reliability and business-reputation of firms varies.

1. Free DD214 and 201 File Record Retrieval

As it is in most cases in life, the old adage that you generally get what you pay for is just as true today when you talk about the free DD214 choices. The primary disadvantage: free services require time. And time is money. If you can afford to wait for your DD214, if you don't need your DD214 soon, then the free services may be for you. Here's the lowdown on free services.

While the NPRC reports that they provide "certified copies of separation documents within 10 workdays 75 percent of the time," they also state "cases more complex than simply copying a separation document now typically are worked in about five weeks." And, finally, they say: "Please do not send a follow-up request before 90 days have elapsed as it may cause further delays." Wow. But, if you can wait two weeks or more, a 75% chance of acquisition is not too bad.

There are many reports on the Net that the NPRC is taking many weeks to perform record retrievals, with a backlog of two hundred thousand (200,000) requests. At their stated receiving rate of 4,000 to 5,000 requests per day, you're talking a 40+ day backlog.

Remember, too, that once you place your *free* order with the NPRC, you will most likely make your records inaccessible to anyone else for the period it takes for the NPRC to process your request. This situation also occurs when another agency requests your record. Once your record is removed from the shelves, it cannot be accessed again until it is returned – perhaps weeks later. So, consider the free offer carefully. Once you place your free order, you most likely won't be able to "go back" or "do over" and order your DD214 for prompt delivery.

To request military service records held by the NPRC, veterans and the next-of-kin of deceased veterans can use their web interface at vetrecs.archives.gov ([click here](#)). Or they and others can use the [Standard Form \(SF\) 180, Request Pertaining to Military Records](#) ([click here](#)). Although not mandatory, the SF 180 is the recommended method to send a request for military service information. This form captures all the necessary information to locate a record. Provide as much information on the form as possible and send copies of any service documents that you may have. Requests may also be submitted as a letter. Your letter should parallel the basic information requested in the SF 180. Please see that form for details on the information that you should include within your letter.

Follow the instructions for preparing the SF 180. Check the table on the last page to determine the location of the record and submit your request to the appropriate address. In most cases, you can:

- Send by Mail

The NPRC's mailing address is:

National Personnel Records Center
Military Personnel Records
1 Archives Drive
St. Louis, MO 63138

- Send by Fax

Their fax number for requesting military records is 314-801-9195. Although fax IS faster, the NPRC will respond in writing only by U.S. snailmail, and that would include any problems that they may encounter - all of which increases the length-of-time the NPRC takes to deliver your DD214.

- Send Electronically

ezDD214.com ([Click HERE](#)), a private company, puts a new electronic spin on the processing of your SF 180. Not all records are at NPRC, and if you use the Government's standard submission procedure, above, you may simply receive a letter from the NPRC indicating that they've forwarded your request to some other records facility. This will add at least days to the process, if not weeks or longer. For just \$10, ezDD214.com guarantees to submit your SF 180 to the correct facility the first time. And, better yet, with their eSign service, if you don't have a printer or fax, no printer or fax is required. There's nothing to printout, mail or fax to anyone anywhere. Their entire submission process is conducted purely electronically, entirely and completely Net based.

2. Hire "Someone Else" to apply for your DD214

We review and rate several DD214 acquisition firms on the very next page. But, in general...

Be wary of services that do nothing more than provide you with a Standard Form 180 for any fee in excess of a nominal amount. There are several firms that charge fees for "Membership" from \$9.95 and up. Other firms charge \$19.95; they provide you with the SF 180, but do NOTHING MORE THAN FAX THE FORM FOR YOU. Even if you don't have a fax, you can go to a local Kinko's or UPS store and use their fax for two bucks or so. Most computer modems come with fax software, computer printers often double as fax machines, and there are even free fax services on the Net. So why pay someone \$19.95, when all they do is give you the same Standard Form 180 (free above), have you complete it and return it to them, and then they FAX THE VERY SAME FORM TO THE VERY SAME FAX NUMBER that you could use, all as we describe in the *free* alternative above?

Use some common sense. Do they have a phone number, a real street address (rather than just a Post Office or drop box)? Do they have researchers who physically go and get your records? Or do they simply do what you can do yourself, and charge an inordinate fee for that "service"?

Do some research, too. Visit the [Better Business Bureau's national database \(click here\)](#).

3. Hire a True Research Company

While the NPRC usually provides copies of service records - after several weeks or months - as a free service, you may find that you require prompt return and/or more extensive research assistance. You may want to hire an independent researcher. You can [consult NARA's list of independent researchers \(click here\)](#) (Do a search for "DD214" specialists.) for additional information.

A qualified, experienced researcher will physically go to the record center and, with your written authorization in-hand, and acting as your agent, retrieve your records for you in person. That's the BIG difference, and the service that you'll definitely want when you need your DD214 promptly.

Make sure that they retrieve your record in person, and don't merely fax a request on your behalf - something that you can do yourself for *free*.

So far, we have identified *only three (3) firms* on the National Archives Independent Researcher List that specializes in acquiring DD214s and 201 files, acquiring these records *in person* with researchers based at or near the respective research facilities.

Our Choice, In Order of Preference:

1. [Touchstone Research Group \(click here\)](#) (HINT, if your record is at NPRC Although they also provide same day, overnight and 2nd day service, if you're not in a hurry, order their one week option. Since, apparently, they process all their DD214s on receipt and to use their own words, they deliver "over 95% ... within 7 business days," most are delivered within one week anyway.)

They are the *only* firm which provides your DD214 via an encrypted download link. The others, Aardvark and DD214 Direct, merely email you your DD214 through the Net unencrypted. Sending your most personal information unencrypted by email makes your information highly vulnerable for identity theft!

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