



NVLSP
NATIONAL VETERANS LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM

HOW TO REVIEW A RECORD AND READ A RATING DECISION



AGENDA

PART I – Reviewing the Record

- A. The Basics
- B. Categories of Records
- C. Developing the Record
- D. Lost Records and Remedies
- E. The Mechanics of Reviewing the Record
- F. Using VBMS and Other VA Systems

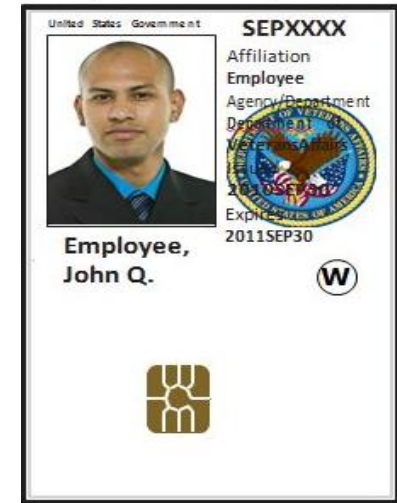
PART II - Reading a Rating Decision

- A. Parts of a Rating Decision
- B. Code Sheet and Notification Letter
- C. Requirements for AMA Rating Decisions

PART 1: REVIEWING THE RECORD

THE BASICS: ACCESS

- **Accreditation**
- **POA – VA Form 21-22**
- **PIV Card = VBMS access through Citrix or Azure**
- **VA Regional Office contact for access: Local Change Management Agent**



Courtesy of VA.gov



THE BASICS

“The Record” – aka Claims File, C-File, efolder

All communications VA has sent to the claimant, everything claimant has sent VA, records/evidence VA has obtained, VA decisional documents, and internal VA communications/documents.

Think of them as grouped into the following categories....



CATEGORIES OF RECORDS

- **Military Service**

- Personnel Records - Official Military Personnel File (OMPF)
- Service Treatment Records (STRs) / Service Medical Records (SMRs)

- **Post-Service Medical**

- C&P Exam Reports / DBQs
- VA Medical Opinions
- CAPRI Records (VA treatment records)
- Records used in making SSA disability benefit decisions
- Records from government facilities (“Medical Treatment - Government Facility”)
- Records of Private Treatment sent by Vet or obtained by VA (“Medical Treatment Non-Government Facility”)

CATEGORIES OF RECORDS

- **VA Communications - External (sent to claimant)**
 - Rating Decisions, Notification Letter, Code Sheet (only sent to reps)
 - Requests for Information or Application
 - General Information (examples: Service Disability Insurance Letter, Tax Abatement Letter)
- **VA Communications – Internal (not sent to claimant)**
 - Draft Decision Letters, Award Prints, VA Form 8 (legacy)
 - Record requests to other VA offices/orgs, DOD, or government agencies
 - TERA memos, ILER findings, RAR (formerly MRRC, JSRRC) memos/reports

CATEGORIES OF RECORDS

- **Claimant Communications (To VA)**
 - Benefits applications, review requests (AMA), legacy appeal documents (NOD, Form 9)
 - Lay statements, pictures,
 - Medical or historical articles, medical treatises
 - Anything Vet sends to VA will be in the file
- **Records NOT *usually* in Claims File (but should be requested/added where appropriate)**
 - Court martial transcripts
 - National Guard and Reserve records (unless claim involves ADT or IADT)
 - Vet Center records (important for COD determinations, b/c can have OTH and still get treatment there)
 - Military unit records
 - Archived VAMC records

DEVELOPING THE RECORD CLAIMANT/VSO RESPONSIBILITIES

- Adequately identify records VA needs to request
- Respond to VA requests for records in a timely fashion
- Complete necessary forms authorizing release of records
- Submit evidence needed to support the claim



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DEVELOPING THE RECORD

VA DUTIES - 38 C.F.R. § 3.159



- **Requesting Federal Records**
 - VA will make as many requests as necessary to obtain relevant records from a Federal dep't or agency until VA concludes that the records sought don't exist or that further efforts to obtain those records would be futile
- **Requesting Private (non-Federal) Records**
 - VA must make “reasonable efforts” to obtain private records (generally 2 attempts – initial request and follow-up)

DEVELOPING THE RECORD- IMPORTANCE

- **During the AMA review process, there are limitations on the submission of evidence:**
 - Whether evidence can be submitted (no evidence in HLR or BVA direct review)
 - When evidence can be submitted (90-day windows for BVA evidence and hearing lanes)
- **Submitting evidence to VA before decision on initial or supplemental claim, or during BVA evidence submission window is vital to the claim**



ADDING TO THE RECORD

- **Info from VA systems that might not be readily accessible in claims file. Ex: JLV or MHS Genesis**
- **Medical Treatises/Articles (because VA examiners must consider them)**
- **Lay Statements! Good for continuity of symptoms**
- **Docs VA will not automatically request on its own (NG records, Court Martial, etc.)**
- **BVA Case Reminder: Sometimes you need to resubmit docs already in the record because of AMA evidence submission rules**
 - **Ex: Evidence submitted after rating decision but before BVA hearing should be resubmitted w/in 90 days after hearing**



ADDING TO THE RECORD - TIPS

- **OCR** any docs a Vet may send you to look for key info (good when you have a lot of electronic or scanned records to sort through)
- **Don't add unnecessary info**, this just makes it harder for VA to sort through
- **Use QuickSubmit for submission**



LOST RECORDS - REASONS

- 1. NPRC Fire 7/12/1973 – destroyed 16-18 million OMPFs**
 - Army: Personnel discharged 11/1/1912 to 1/1/1960 ~80% destroyed
 - Air Force: Personnel discharged 9/25/1947 to 1/1964 (with names alphabetically after Hubbard, James E.) ~ 75% destroyed
- 2. RO Shredding – VA OIG investigations found that ROs improperly processed or shredded documents submitted by claimants from 4/2007 – 10/2008 and in 2015. Improper handling / shredding likely occurred beyond those dates.**
- 3. Physical Private Medical Records – Usually destroyed after 5-10 yrs**
- 4. Archived VAMC Records – VHA completed the transition to electronic recordkeeping at all VAMCs in late 2004. Records before that time were archived. Good luck getting these.**

TRUE OR FALSE

When VA determines that a veteran's personnel records are lost, the claimant's evidentiary burden for establishing entitlement to benefits is relaxed.



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TRUE OR FALSE

FALSE

VA's duty to assist in obtaining records is heightened when federal records are lost or destroyed, but the claimant's evidentiary burden for establishing entitlement is not relaxed.

- *Jandreau v. Nicholson*, 492 F.3d 1372 (Fed. Cir. 2007)



LOST RECORDS - REMEDIES

- **Make sure VA met its Duty to Assist**
 - How many times did VA request the records? Were the requests submitted to the correct place? Is there an official finding that records don't exist and proper notification per 38 C.F.R. § 3.159(e)?
- **Submit Own Records or make own request if possible (Esp. for National Guard and Reserve Records)**
- **Look at CAPRI Tabs if archived VAMC records are lost, to see old appointment data (more on that later)**
- **Tell VA if claimant knows a record doesn't exist, so VA doesn't keep asking**
- **Competent, credible lay statements are even more important in these types of cases**



LOST (AND FOUND) RECORDS

- **Ensure VA applies 38 C.F.R. § 3.156(c) when assigning the effective date**
 - If relevant official service dep't records are added to c-file after denial of a claim, and they existed at time of the denial, VA must reconsider the denied claim (even if benefits have already been awarded based on a later claim)
 - Effective date based on date of claim that was denied
 - **Doesn't apply** to records that VA could not have obtained when it decided the claim because the records did not exist at that time, or because the claimant failed to provide sufficient info for VA to identify and obtain the records from the respective service dep't or other official source.

CASE STUDY

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO REVIEW THE RECORD

- Vet served in Army from 1968-70 with service in Vietnam
- STRs included a handwritten diagnoses of schizophrenia
- Vet filed VA claim within one year of separation – “my head isn’t right”
- VA denied SC benefits for a mental health condition in 1971, finding no diagnosed disability and failing to note in-service dx of schizophrenia
- Vet wrote in multiple statements that his symptoms started in-service

CASE STUDY

- Between 1978 and 2019, Vet applied for VA comp for various mental health conditions including PTSD, schizophrenia, anxiety. VA denied claims, despite confirmed diagnoses, each time failing to note the in-service schizophrenia dx.
- Finally, Vet granted SC for PTSD at 50% in 2020, retroactive to date of 2019 claim
- New representative's review of STRs identified the handwritten diagnosis of schizophrenia
- Rep filed successful CUE claim, resulting in SC for schizophrenia being awarded retro to 1970

REVIEWING THE RECORD

- **What (likely) happened?**
 - After the first VA adjudicator missed the schizophrenia dx in the STRs, later VA adjudicators relied on and repeated the factual findings in the prior rating decisions, without looking at the STRs
- **Lesson:**
 - Never assume VA did their homework. Talk to the Vet in order to determine what may be in the record that VA missed and conduct your own review of the record. Don't rely of recitation of facts in VA decisional documents.

STARTING A RECORD REVIEW

THE BASICS

- How you approach a record review is going to depend on where the claimant is in the claims process
- Reviewing a record for a claimant who has never filed a VA claim is different from a record review when VA has just denied the Vet's claim
- Keeping the above in mind, the following slides provide some approaches and considerations for reviewing a record...



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STARTING A RECORD REVIEW OVERVIEW

- Determine where claimant is in the VA process and determine any upcoming **DEADLINES**
- Determine whether claim has been **filed before**
- Identify **missing records** that should be in the record (VA treatment records, STRs, military personnel records)
- Identify records that can be added to support the claim
- **Review VA's findings.....**



STARTING A RECORD REVIEW

THE BASICS

- **Name** – Note changes. Ask Vet about maiden name, married names, etc. This is important if you are reviewing VA record requests or making your own records request
- **DOB** – For expedition/AOD, eligibility for pension w/o P&T disability, etc.
- **Ask about NG/Reserve Records** – Look for Points Document to determine dates of ADT/IADT (“Veteran” status if current disability linked to injury or disease incurred in ADT, or injury during IADT)
- **Personnel Record/Military Service Tab in VBMS (for locations and dates of service)** – Relevant for some SC presumptions, combat “presumption,” PTSD stressors, etc. (DD Form 214 will have most of this info, but not always correct/complete)
- **Contact Information** – To confirm VA has the correct address for notification letters



STARTING A RECORD REVIEW

WHERE AM I?

Review

- 1. All RDs and code sheets, decision review requests, and benefits applications issued/filed within past year**
 - Will help you determine current ratings, pending claims, urgent deadlines, reasons for denial
 - Ex: Vet may not understand that 0% means SC or the reason for a denial, so can't depend what they tell you
- 2. Extend search of RDs and claims to determine whether Vet previously claimed or was denied benefits for a disability for which Vet now seeks benefits**

STARTING A RECORD REVIEW

WHERE AM I?

3. *Create timeline while reviewing*

- Start at newest doc, otherwise you could be reviewing years of claims hx just to find out 3 years ago, claimant never sought review
- Will help establish correct effective dates (ex: up to 1 year prior to claim for increase if there is evidence of increase in severity in that year)
- Look at **date stamp** (physical or electronic) on the document to determine when received by VA
- If VA scanned the envelope, and the submission is associated with a **BVA appeal, look at the postmark date**
 - **BVA** will accept the postmark date as the date of submission of a document, if there is a time limit for filing the document
 - If no postmark is of record, BVA will presume the postmark date is 5 days before the date VA received the document, excluding weekends and legal holidays
 - 38 C.F.R. § 20.110(a)



STARTING THE RECORD REVIEW

WHAT DO I NEED?

- **After initial review, dive deeper into the evidence to determine:**
 - Theories of service connection
 - What elements need to be established
 - Favorable findings (AMA)
- **Then ask**
 - What evidence do I have?
 - What evidence do I need?



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STARTING THE RECORD REVIEW EVIDENCE OF THE ELEMENTS

- **In-Service Injury/Disease/Event**
 - STRs (may not include hospital records), especially exit exam reports, reports of medical hx, and post-deployment surveys
 - Personnel records, such as those showing service in a location where toxic exposure is presumed makers of personal assault
 - Lay statements
- **Current Diagnosis**
 - C&P exam reports, private treatment records, CAPRI/VATRs
 - Is it a chronic condition, with symptoms “noted” or dx in service?
 - If no current dx, has Vet reported symptoms?
- **Nexus**
 - Private and VA medical opinions
 - Is a nexus needed? (presumptive disease, chronic condition)

HYPOTHESIS

Vet has a current dx of carpal tunnel syndrome, which is a chronic condition under 38 C.F.R. § 3.309 (“other organic diseases of the nervous system”) but there is no clear in-service diagnosis. In fact, the Vet was not formally diagnosed until 2 years after separation.

You know the Vet can establish SC by showing that the condition was “noted” in service or the first post-service year and there was continuity of symptoms since. Which of the following records should you review to see if the condition was “noted” in service?

- A. Symptoms in STRs**
- B. Post-service private treatment records**
- C. Post-service lay statements about in-service symptoms**
- D. All of the above**
- E. Only A & B**



HYPO - ANSWER



- **There is no definition of “noted” in VA regs, but it could include:**
 - **Symptoms or complaints listed in STRs**
 - **Condition not diagnosed beyond legitimate question as a chronic condition listed in § 3.309**
 - **Retrospective post-service statement about symptoms experienced in service or the first year post-service (if found credible by VA)**

STARTING THE RECORD REVIEW EVIDENCE OF THE ELEMENTS

- **Can't find official records/documents? Look for lay statements that satisfy the element or point you to official records/documents**
- **Claimant's testimony can be found in:**
 - Claim forms ex: "Back pain from parachuting over 50 times"
 - History section of exam reports/DBQs or descriptions in treatment records Ex: "Vet says she's walked with a limp since broken ankle in service. On appearance, Vet limps and uses cane."
 - Hearing transcript
 - Review request forms



REVIEWING THE RECORD - TIPS

- **CAPRI Records:** Check VBMS to identify the facilities and years for which VA requested and received VA treatment records; sometimes VA hasn't request all records or recent records haven't been added
- **Non-C&P cases:** If assisting with a case not involving disability comp or pension (ex: Education, VHA), relevant docs may not be in VBMS. Files from that VA organization/office are typically only uploaded to VBMS after the claimant appeals the initial denial

REVIEWING THE RECORD

MEDICAL ABBREVIATIONS

- **ABD** – abdominal
- **Ass or A** – assessment (a lesser degree of certainty than “diagnosis”)
- **c̄** – with
- **c/o** – complaints of
- **dx** – diagnosis
- **f/u** – follow up
- **fx** – fracture
- **GSW** – gunshot wound
- **HEENTC** – head, eyes, ears, nose, throat, chest
- **hx** – history
- **Imp or I** – impression (examiner’s identification of the condition after exam and review of medical hx, sometimes considered a “working” dx)
- **LBP** – lower back pain
- **NKA** – no known allergies
- **PRN** – as needed
- **r/o** – rule out (the diagnosis is being considered by the examiner, but further clinical assessment is needed to confirm that diagnosis)
- **ROM** – range of motion
- **RTC** – return to clinic
- **RUQ** – right upper quadrant
- **rx** – prescription
- **s/o** – suggestive of
- **SOAP** – subjective, objective, assessment, plan
- **s/p** – status post
- **URI** – upper respiratory infection
- **WNL** – within normal limits
- **(-)** – negative for

Standard Form 600
 General Services Administration and
 Interagency Committee on Medical Records
 FPMR 101-11.806-8 Exception Approved by NARS
 October 1975 1 Aug 79

HEALTH RECORD

CHRONOLOGICAL RECORD OF MEDICAL CARE

DATE
 31 JAN 1984

SYMPTOMS, DIAGNOSIS, TREATMENT, TREATING ORGANIZATION (Sign each entry)

Podiatry Section

5 Rt. S/R jumping injury Both feet
 13 Jan 84
 6 Minimal discomfort today over
 peroneus Brevis tendon
 7 S/R trauma - breeding
 8 Return to full duty
 9 F. U. S.R. A
 [Signature]

PRACTICAL TIPS - VBMS

VBMS
Search ▾ All Claims My Claims
Give Feedback My History ▾

Thu Jul 24 2025 09:39:24AM EDT, Version 38.5-20250618-1817, ID 56590

File #: ICN: EDIPI #:

Veteran ▾
Intent To File
Claims ▾
Documents
Rated Issues
Notes

Actions ▾

▾ Veteran Summary

Hide Filters

⋮ Actions
Last Opened Document

Table preferences ▾
🔔 Alerts ▾

Showing 1-100 of 156 documents

	Subject ↓	Document Type ↓	Document Category ↓	Receipt Date ↓	Uploading User Facility Job Title ↓	POA Organization ↓	POA Code ↓	Claims SSN ↓
<input type="checkbox"/>	BVA Decision	Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) Decision	Appeals	10/23/2024				
<input type="checkbox"/>		Appellate Brief (Veterans Service Officer (VSO) Informal Hearing Presentation (IHP); Post remand Brief; Attorney Brief)	Appeals	09/09/2024				
<input type="checkbox"/>	notifications	BVA Case Notifications	Appeals	07/04/2024				
<input type="checkbox"/>	W/D Hearing request	BVA Hearing Withdrawal	Appeals	06/25/2024	Program Specialist			
<input type="checkbox"/>		Third Party Correspondence	Correspondence	06/25/2024				

Items Per Page 100 ▾
Skip to Page
Go

Filter Results

Text Search

Keyword
+

Military Service Documents
+

Period of Service Documents
+

Document Views
+

Document Title
+

Document Category
+

Document Type
+

Documents Containing Notes
+

Keyword (Annotations)
+

Annotation Type
+

Veteran Information

SSN: 🔗

File #: 🔗

ICN: 🔗

EDIPI: 🔗

Gender:

Birth Date: 🔗

Death Date:

General POA: 075 - POA National Organization - AMERICAN RED CROSS

eFolder Access: Yes

Chg of Addr Auth: Yes

VR&E Eligibility +

Pending Claims +

PRACTICAL TIPS - KEYWORD FUNCTION

Hide Filters

Filters

Text Search

Keyword -

Keyword

Add +

Selected keywords: (29 remaining)

STR ×

Military Service Documents +

Period of Service Documents +

Document Views +

Document Title +

Document Category +

Filter Results

Reset Filters

⋮ Actions
Last Opened Document

Showing 1-2 of 2 documents

<input type="checkbox"/>	Subject ↑	Document Type ↑	Document Category ↑	Receipt D
<input type="checkbox"/>		STR - Dental	STRs	02/09/2017
<input type="checkbox"/>	TAB B-ENL P. 40, 44 SEP P. 47	STR - Medical	STRs	02/09/2017

Items Per Page
100 v
Skip to Page
Go

SEARCH TERMS EXAMPLES

- **“Certificate” – DD Form 214**
- **“Narrative” “Code” “Notification” – Rating Decision, Code Sheet, Notification Letter**
- **“Government” – Medical records are often labeled as “Medical Treatment Record-Government Facility” (or “Non-Government Facility”)**
- **“Correspondence” – Very general and sometimes a catch-all term**
- **“Examination” – Older C&P exams may be labeled as ‘VA Examination’**

***Be Creative: you might consider a text search for “ringing” as opposed to tinnitus**

PRACTICAL TIPS - TEXT SEARCH FUNCTION

Hide Filters

Filters

Text Search

No documents OCR'ed
OCR not begun

Actions ⇅

- Select - ⇅

Include All —

Add

neck
✕

Exclude All —

Filter Results

[Reset Filters](#)

⋮ Actions

Last Opened Document

Showing 1-1 of 1 documents

	Subject ↑	Document Type ↑	Docu Categ
<input type="checkbox"/>	TAB B-ENL P. 40, 44 SEP P. 47	STR - Medical	STRs

Items Per Page 100 ▼ Skip to Page

PRACTICAL TIPS - TEXT SEARCH

FUNCTION

Hide Search Results

Page 44 of 65

Matches: Results 6 of 6	Page
HEAD FACE NECK AND SCALP	40
REMOVAL FROM NECK 28. HAVE	45
ADMISSION: LYMPHADENOPATHY, NECK DNEPTE, LINE	52
his posterior neck . He had	52
his posterior neck . He had	52
of the neck where a	52

BEST COPY

Search < > Clear

YES	NO	CHECK EACH ITEM YES
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	27. HAVE YOU BEEN UNABLE TO HOLD [REDACTED] BECAUSE OF: A. SENSITIVITY TO CHEMICALS, DUST, SUNLIGHT, ETC. B. INABILITY TO PERFORM CERTAIN MOTIONS C. INABILITY TO ASSUME CERTAIN POSITIONS D. OTHER MEDICAL REASONS (If yes, give reasons)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	28. HAVE YOU EVER WORKED WITH RADIOACTIVE SUBSTANCE?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	29. DID YOU HAVE DIFFICULTY WITH SCHOOL STUDIES OR TEACHERS? (If yes, give details)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	30. HAVE YOU EVER BEEN REFUSED EMPLOYMENT BECAUSE OF YOUR HEALTH? (If yes, state reason and give details)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	31. HAVE YOU EVER BEEN DENIED LIFE INSURANCE? (If yes, state reason and give details)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	32. HAVE YOU HAD, OR HAVE YOU BEEN ADVISED TO HAVE, ANY OPERATIONS? (If yes, describe and give age at which occurred)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	33. HAVE YOU EVER BEEN A PATIENT (committed or voluntary) IN A MENTAL HOSPITAL OR SANATORIUM? (If yes, specify when, where, why, and name of doctor, and complete address of hospital or clinic)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	34. HAVE YOU EVER HAD ANY ILLNESS OR INJURY OTHER THAN THOSE ALREADY NOTED? (If yes, specify when, where, and give details)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	35. HAVE YOU CONSULTED OR BEEN TREATED BY CLINICS, PHYSICIANS, HEALERS, OR OTHER PRACTITIONERS WITHIN THE PAST 5 YEARS? (If yes, give complete address of doctor, hospital, clinic, and details)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	36. HAVE YOU TREATED YOURSELF FOR ILLNESSES OTHER THAN MINOR COLDS? (If yes, which illnesses)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	37. HAVE YOU EVER BEEN REJECTED FOR MILITARY SERVICE BECAUSE OF PHYSICAL, MENTAL, OR OTHER REASONS? (If yes, give date and reason for rejection)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	38. HAVE YOU EVER BEEN DISCHARGED FROM MILITARY SERVICE BECAUSE OF PHYSICAL, MENTAL, OR OTHER REASONS? (If yes, give date, reason, and type of discharge: whether honorable, other than honorable, for unfitness or unsuitability)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	39. HAVE YOU EVER RECEIVED, IS THERE PENDING, HAVE YOU APPLIED FOR, OR DO YOU INTEND TO APPLY FOR PENSION OR COMPENSATION FOR EXISTING DISABILITY? (If yes, specify what kind, granted by whom, and what amount, when, why)

28. I WORKED [REDACTED] X-RAY [REDACTED]

32. LUMP REMOVED FROM **NECK**

REVIEWING THE RECORD USING VBMS APPS

VBMS APPLICATIONS - OVERVIEW

- **Caseflow** – Meant to replace VACOLS, provides functionality to the BVA and other VA orgs/stakeholders to enable the processing and tracking of appeals and related processes
- **eFolder Express** – part of Caseflow that allows a user to bulk-download documents from a Vet's eFolder (electronic folder)
- **CAPRI (Compensation and Pension Record Interchange)** – Holds records from VAMCs and allows for efficient communication between the VHA and VBA. Electronic records started in 2005.

VBMS APPLICATIONS - OVERVIEW

- **SHARE** – Utilized by ROs to access info such as: the Beneficiary Inquiry Records Locator System (BIRLS), Pending Issue File (PIF), and Payment History File (PHF)
- **VACOLS (Veterans Appeals Control and Locator)** – Database for tracking legacy appeals and monitoring pending workloads maintained by BVA

VBMS APPS - CASEFLOW


All cases	Unassigned (3)	Assigned (0)	Completed
------------------	----------------	--------------	-----------

All AMA cases represented by American Red Cross that have been active at the Board of Veterans' Appeals in the past 2 weeks.

Viewing 1-15 of 38 total

[Previous](#)
1
[2](#)
[3](#)
[Next](#)

Case Details ▾	Issues ▾	Types ▾ 
Names (File Number)	1	AOD, Original
	3	Original
	0	Original
	3	Original
	5	Original
	2	Original
	4	Original

Docket ▾ 

Clear filter

- Direct Review (11)
- Evidence (7)
- Hearing (16)
- Legacy (4)

VBMS APPS - CASEFLOW

- Issues)
- Appellant's Power of Attorney)
- About the Veteran)
- Case Timeline)

Issues

1. **Benefit type:** Veterans Health Administration
Issue: Caregiver| Eligibility - PCAFC
Special Issues: None

Appellant's Power of Attorney

To retrieve the latest POA information, please click the "Refresh POA" button. POA last refreshed on 07/

[Refresh](#)

Service Organization: AMERICAN RED CROSS

Power of Attorney (POA) data comes from VBMS. To update the POA information stored in VBMS, please send a task to the VLJ support management branch.

About the Veteran

Name: [REDACTED]
Gender: Male
Date of birth: [REDACTED]
Mailing Address: [REDACTED]
Email Address: [REDACTED]

Veteran information comes from VBMS. To update the veteran's information, please send a request to the VLJ support staff.



VBMS APPS - CASEFLOW / EFOLDER EXPRESS

 Caseflow eFolder Express

EI

Welcome to eFolder Express

eFolder Express allows VA employees to bulk-download VBMS eFolders.
Search for a Veteran ID number below to get started.

Note: eFolder Express now includes Virtual VA documents from the Legacy Content Manager Documents tab in VBMS.

[Recent downloads...](#)

Provides ability to download of all of Vet's documents in the c-file into a Zip file (document names are hard to read)

VBMS APPS - CAPRI

CAPRI Connected To VISTA.WASHINGTON.MED.VA.GOV (Port:19227)

File Edit Tools Help

Other Facilities Visited VBA eFolder Queue [Redacted]

DO: [Redacted] CN: 1018262732 FLAG

CAPR Exams
 7131 Request
 Reports
 Admin
 Health Summaries
 Clinical Documents
 Joint Longitudinal Viewer

0 Items

Current View 100 Documents

2008-11-16 PCC - IN PERSON - ESTABLISHED
 STANDARD TITLE: PRIMARY CARE NOTE
 DATE OF NOTE: MAY 16, 2025@13:03 ENTRY DATE: MAY 16, 2025@13:03:09
 AUTHOR: STENDEL, PETER F EXP COSIGNER:
 INSTITUTION: S PRINCE GEORGES CITY VA CLINIC
 DIVISION: S PRINCE GEORGES CITY VA CLINIC
 URGENCY: STATUS: COMPLETED

Established Patient In Person

CC:

annual visit
Subjective:

80 yo M with h/o HIN , HLD, CHD, bph-notes he had urolyft about 11/22 by Ches. urology for BPH with help with BPH sex- but have waned over time About 6/10 in terms of effectiveness

seeing podiatrist for feet and ? nerve pain
-goes for treatments on feet weekly and has cream to use

still seeing nonVA MDs
nonVA
PCP- dr. Barry--> still sees
renal- Dr. O. --- no longer seeing
GU- Ches. urology-->still sees
pod- Dr. Farzad Saleh

Hospitalizations since last visit
(x) no
(?) yes:
ER visit- none
UC- yes for cold

New medication allergies
(x) no
(?) yes:

MEDICATION REVIEW:
(?) I reviewed the medications the patient has been taking and the following list is accurate.


Find: Search

VBMS APPS - CAPRI



- **“Clinical Documents” and “Notes” tabs have the most info; “Problem List” is useful for identifying diagnoses, “Discharge Summaries” is good for locating in-patient stays**
- **The Default Search function searches for 100 docs at a time, unless you choose “All”**

VBMS APPS - CAPRI

 CAPRI Connected To VISTA.WASHINGTON.MED.VA.GOV (Port:19227)

File Edit Tools Help

Other Facilities Visited | VBA eFolder Queue | Retransmit Worksheet

C&P Exams | 7131 Request | Reports | Admin | Health Summaries | Clinical Documents | Joint Longitudinal Viewer

Pt. Inquiry
 Detailed Inpt. Inquiry
 C&P Exam Detail
 7131 Detail
 Additional Treating Facilities
 View Registration Data
Patient Profile MAS (Full)
 Surgery Report

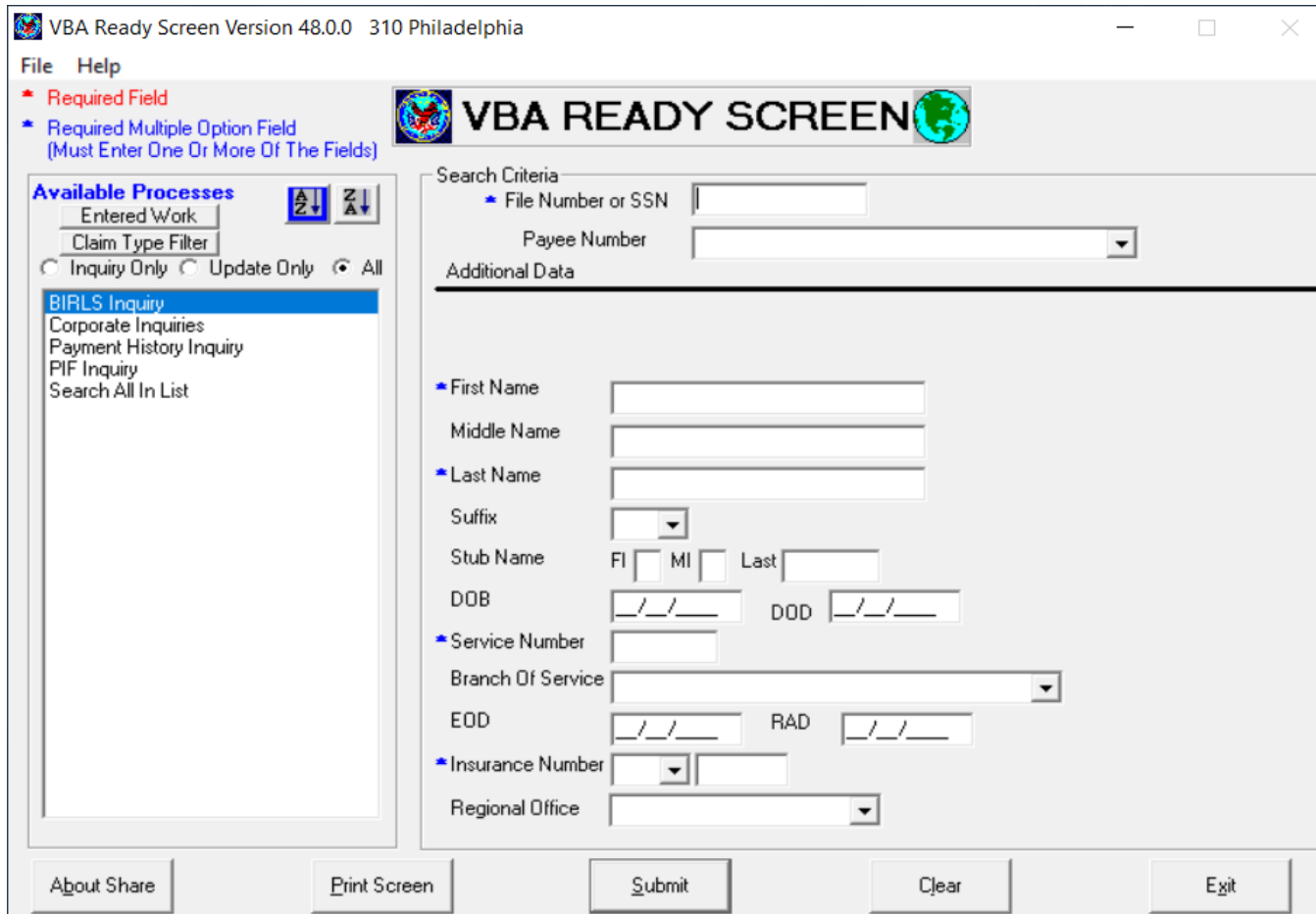
PATIENT PROFILE: [REDACTED] Outpatient Page: 1
 Dates: 01/01/1980 [REDACTED] Report Date: JUL 24, 2025@10:00

Date of Birth: [REDACTED] Marital Status: [REDACTED]
 Sex: [REDACTED] Religious Pref.: [REDACTED]
 Patient ID: [REDACTED] Occupation: [REDACTED]
 Who entered: [REDACTED] Place of Birth: [REDACTED]
 Date entered: 06/16/2011
 Current Means Test: NO LONGER REQUIRED Date Means Test: 06/30/2017

Primary Eligibility: SC LESS THAN 50%
 Other Eligibilities:

Tip: “Reports” tab can be used to find original registration data or dates of past visits and may be useful in establishing visits to VAMCs when archived records are lost. Can be hit or miss—you may need to look through all categories on the left of the screen.

VBMS APPS - SHARE



VBA Ready Screen Version 48.0.0 310 Philadelphia

File Help

- * Required Field
- * Required Multiple Option Field (Must Enter One Or More Of The Fields)

Available Processes

Entered Work

Claim Type Filter

Inquiry Only Update Only All

- BIRLS Inquiry
- Corporate Inquiries
- Payment History Inquiry
- PIF Inquiry
- Search All In List

VBA READY SCREEN

Search Criteria

- * File Number or SSN
- Payee Number

Additional Data

- * First Name
- Middle Name
- * Last Name
- Suffix
- Stub Name FI MI Last
- DOB DOD
- * Service Number
- Branch Of Service
- EOD RAD
- * Insurance Number
- Regional Office

The “Payment History Inquiry” can be useful for seeing retroactive payments and monthly payments and to identify any deductions

VBMS APPS - SHARE

Payment History Inquiry Screen (TINQ) Process is: Payment History Inquiry

File Help

File Number [REDACTED] Payee [00] Name [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Historical Payment Information

Last Activity [07/01/2025] Last Microfiche [REDACTED] Prior Microfiche [REDACTED]

Payment Data

Select	Type	Amount	Pay Date	Routing Code	Address Line One	Address Line Two	Zip Code	RO	Paid By
<input type="checkbox"/>	Regular	\$3,831.30	07/01/2025	[REDACTED]	7142972194	checking		362 Houstr	Corporate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Regular	\$3,831.30	05/30/2025	[REDACTED]	7142972194	checking		362 Houstr	Corporate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Regular	\$3,831.30	05/01/2025	[REDACTED]	7142972194	checking		362 Houstr	Corporate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Regular	\$3,831.30	04/01/2025	[REDACTED]	7142972194	checking		362 Houstr	Corporate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Regular	\$3,831.30	02/28/2025	[REDACTED]	7142972194	checking		362 Houstr	Corporate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Regular	\$3,831.30	01/31/2025	[REDACTED]	7142972194	checking		362 Houstr	Corporate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Regular	\$3,831.30	12/31/2024	[REDACTED]	7142972194	checking		362 Houstr	Corporate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Regular	\$3,737.85	11/29/2024	[REDACTED]	7142972194	checking		362 Houstr	Corporate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Regular	\$3,737.85	11/01/2024	[REDACTED]	7142972194	checking		362 Houstr	Corporate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Regular	\$3,737.85	10/01/2024	[REDACTED]	7142972194	checking		362 Houstr	Corporate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Regular	\$3,737.85	08/30/2024	[REDACTED]	7142972194	checking		362 Houstr	Corporate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Retroactive - C&	\$11,967.50	08/14/2024	[REDACTED]	7142972194	checking		362 Houstr	Corporate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Regular	\$2,241.91	08/01/2024	[REDACTED]	7142972194	checking		362 Houstr	Corporate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Regular	\$2,241.91	07/01/2024	[REDACTED]	7142972194	checking		362 Houstr	Corporate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Regular	\$2,241.91	05/31/2024	[REDACTED]	7142972194	checking		362 Houstr	Corporate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Retroactive - C&	\$2,528.15	05/16/2024	[REDACTED]	7142972194	checking		362 Houstr	Corporate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Regular	\$1,716.28	05/01/2024	[REDACTED]	7142972194	checking		362 Houstr	Corporate

Returned Payment Data

Type	Amount	Issue Date	Cancel Date	Check/Trace No	Reason	RO	Paid By

07/24/2025 10:03 AM Production Clip Selected Line(s) For Form FL 4-340 Print Screen New File Number Ready Exit

VBMS APPS - VACOLS

VACOLS Appeal

File Processes Utilities Help

Appeal Id: [REDACTED] Name: [REDACTED] RO: R097 Status: HIS

Rem Reasons Mail(5) Atty Fee Oth Docs CAVC Motion CC

Docket Dispatch Issues(4) Address/VI Prior Locs Attach Diary (0) Hearings

Date Received BVA: Status:

Docket

Number	Date
[REDACTED]	<input type="text" value="08/30/21"/>

Regional Office:

Service Org:

Insurance/Loan Nr:

Medical Facility:

Date To Service Org:

Type Action:

Dates

Notification: NOD:

SOC: Denial

SSOCs: Informal Formal

1) 2) 3)

4) 5)

Form 9: BVA Cert:

Thurber: Prior Dec:

Hearing Request:

Travel Board

Ready Video

Req Date: Outbased

DRO

Elected: Id:

Ready to Rate

Location:

VBMS APPS - VACOLS

VACOLS Appeal
✕

File Processes Utilities Help

Appeal Id: [REDACTED] Name: [REDACTED] RO: RO17 Status: HIS

Rem Reasons Mail(0) Atty Fee Oth Docs CAVC Motion CC

Docket Dispatch Issues(2) Address/VI Prior Locs Attach Diary (0) Hearings

Dec Team:
 Counsel:
 Bd Member:

Hearing
 Action:
 Opinion:

RO Transfer Status

Action	Date
Remand Recert/Returned BVA	11/05/14

Decision
 Date: Cit Nr:
 Disp:
 Rem to:
 DRO Decision

Special Interest

-- Special Contentions (Check all that apply or No Special Contentions)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agent Orange/Herbicide	<input type="checkbox"/> Radiation Related Bomb
<input type="checkbox"/> Asbestosis	<input type="checkbox"/> Radiation Related Non-Bomb
<input type="checkbox"/> Gulf War Undiag Illness	<input type="checkbox"/> Sarcoidosis
<input type="checkbox"/> Hepatitis C	<input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Assault/Harassment
<input type="checkbox"/> HIV/AIDS	<input type="checkbox"/> Tobacco Related Disability
<input type="checkbox"/> Mustard Gas	<input type="checkbox"/> PTSD
<input type="checkbox"/> CLCW	<input type="checkbox"/> PACT Act

No Special Contentions

-- Other (Check all that apply or None of These)

<input type="checkbox"/> 38 U.S.C. 1151 Claim	<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Discharge VA Exam
<input type="checkbox"/> No New and Material	<input type="checkbox"/> Total Rating Termination
<input type="checkbox"/> Virtual VA Appeal	<input type="checkbox"/> ECA Appeal
<input type="checkbox"/> SNL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> VBMS Appeal

None of These

-- Pilot Program (Check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Standardized NOD	<input type="checkbox"/> Waiver Form	<input type="checkbox"/> Express Lane
---	--------------------------------------	---------------------------------------

RECAP ON USING VA APPS TO REVIEW THE RECORD

- **SHARE** – useful for viewing payment info which can be helpful for determining retro awards, monthly amounts, and overpayments
- **CAPRI** – to confirm all pertinent medical records are in the VBMS eFolder
- **Caseflow and VACOLS** – provide more info on status of appeals
- **E-Folder Express** – useful if you have trouble accessing VBMS or you need a copy of all docs in a single file

PART II.

READING A

RATING

DECISION

PARTS OF A RATING DECISION

- Introduction
- Decision
- Evidence
- Reasons for decision
- References

RATING DECISION



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Benefits Administration
Regional Office

██████████
VA File Number
██████████

Represented By:
AMERICAN RED CROSS
Rating Decision
06/17/2025

INTRODUCTION

The records reflect that you are a Veteran of the Peacetime. You served in the Army from June 2, 1981 to June 1, 1984. We received your supplemental claim on April 17, 2025. Based on a review of the evidence listed below, we have made the following decision(s) on your claim.

DECISION

Evaluation of bilateral hearing loss, which is currently 10 percent disabling, is increased to 30 percent effective April 17, 2025.

EVIDENCE

- VA Form 20-0995, Decision Review Request - Supplemental Claims, received April 17, 2025
- Service Treatment Records, for the period June 2, 1981 to June 1, 1984
- VAMC (Veterans Affairs Medical Center) treatment records, for the period September 19, 2024 to May 5, 2025
- VA Form 27-0820, Report of General Information, received May 15, 2025
- C&P Exam, LHI, DBQ AUDIO Hearing loss and tinnitus, conducted June 04, 2025



PARTS OF A RATING DECISION

INTRODUCTION

The records reflect that you are a Veteran of the Peacetime. You served in the Army from June 2, 1981 to June 1, 1984. We received your supplemental claim on April 17, 2025. Based on a review of the evidence listed below, we have made the following decision(s) on your claim.

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PARTS OF A RATING DECISION

REASONS FOR DECISION

8. Service connection for left shoulder strain (claimed as bilateral arms).

Service connection may be granted for a disability which began in military service or was caused by some event or experience in service. (38 CFR 3.303)

A direct grant of service connection requires: 1) medical evidence of a current disability, 2) evidence of the incurrence or aggravation of a disease or injury in active military service, and 3) medical evidence of a nexus (link) between the current disability and the in-service disease or injury. (38 CFR 3.303, 38 CFR 3.304)

The evidence does not show an event, disease or injury in service. Your service treatment records do not contain complaints, treatment, or diagnosis for this condition. There was no continuity of symptoms from service to the present. We did not find a link between your medical condition and military service. (38 CFR 3.303, 38 CFR 3.304)

Service connection for left shoulder strain is denied since this condition neither occurred in nor was caused by service. (38 CFR 3.303, 38 CFR 3.304)

Favorable Findings identified in this decision:

You have been diagnosed with a disability. VA contract examination conducted on June 21, 2024 confirms a current diagnosis of left shoulder strain.



PARTS OF A RATING DECISION

REFERENCES:

Title 38 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Pensions, Bonuses and Veterans' Relief contains the regulations of the Department of Veterans Affairs which govern entitlement to all Veteran benefits. For additional information regarding applicable laws and regulations, please consult your local library, or visit us at our website, www.va.gov.

CODE SHEET

Rating Decision		<i>Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Benefits Administration</i>		Page 1 of 4 07/23/2025	
NAME OF VETERAN	V.A. FILE NUMBER	SOCIAL SECURITY NR	PDA		
██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████		
COPY TO					

ACTIVE DUTY			
EOB	WAD	BRANCH	CHARACTER OF DISCHARGE
0███/1969	0███/1970	Marine Corps	Honorable

LEGACY CODES			
ADD'L SVC CODE	COMBAT CODE	SPECIAL PLOV CDE	FUTURE EXAM DATE
	1		None

JURISDICTION: EBA Decision Date d 07/16/2025

ASSOCIATED CLAIM(s): 030; Board Grant Rating; 07/16/2025

SUBJECT TO COMPENSATION (LSC)

- 9411 POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER AND ALCOHOL USE DISORDER (PTSD - Non-Combat/Fear - Easing Standard)
Service Connected, Vietnam Era, Incurred
Static Disability
50% from 09/19/2018
70% from 11/17/2023
- 8520 RIGHT LOWER EXTREMITY RADICULOPATHY, SCIATIC NERVE ASSOCIATED WITH LUMBOSACRAL STRAIN WITH DEGENERATIVE ARTHRITIS, DEGENERATIVE DISC DISEASE, AND INTERVERTEBRAL DISC SYNDROME
Service Connected, Vietnam Era, Secondary
Static Disability
10% from 09/19/2018
20% from 11/17/2023

CODE SHEET

SUBJECT TO COMPENSATION (1.SC)

- | | |
|------|--|
| 9411 | POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER AND ALCOHOL USE DISORDER [PTSD - Non-Combat/Fear - Easing Standard]
Service Connected, Vietnam Era, Incurred
Static Disability
50% from 09/19/2018
70% from 11/17/2023 |
| 8520 | RIGHT LOWER EXTREMITY RADICULOPATHY, SCIATIC NERVE ASSOCIATED WITH LUMBOSACRAL STRAIN WITH DEGENERATIVE ARTHRITIS, DEGENERATIVE DISC DISEASE, AND INTERVERTEBRAL DISC SYNDROME
Service Connected, Vietnam Era, Secondary
Static Disability
10% from 09/19/2018
20% from 11/17/2023 |
| 8520 | LEFT LOWER EXTREMITY RADICULOPATHY, SCIATIC NERVE ASSOCIATED WITH LUMBOSACRAL STRAIN WITH DEGENERATIVE ARTHRITIS, DEGENERATIVE DISC DISEASE, AND INTERVERTEBRAL DISC SYNDROME
Service Connected, Vietnam Era, Secondary
Static Disability
10% from 09/19/2018
20% from 11/17/2023 |

CODE SHEET

COMBINED EVALUATION FOR COMPENSATION :

70% from 09/19/2018 (Bilateral factor of 1.9 Percent for diagnostic codes 8520, 8520)

90% from 11/17/2023 (Bilateral factor of 5.9 Percent for diagnostic codes 8520, 8520, 8526, 8526)

Individual Unemployability Granted from November 17, 2023

SPECIAL MONTHLY COMPENSATION :

S-1 Entitled to special monthly compensation under 38 U.S.C. 1114, subsection (s) and 38 CFR 3.350(i) on account of posttraumatic stress disorder and alcohol use disorder a single disability upon which a total individual unemployability rating is based and additional service-connected disabilities of left lower extremity radiculopathy, femoral nerve, right lower extremity radiculopathy, femoral nerve, lumbosacral strain with degenerative arthritis, degenerative disc disease, and intervertebral disc syndrome, left lower extremity radiculopathy, sciatic nerve, right lower extremity radiculopathy, sciatic nerve, tinnitus, independently ratable at 60 percent or more from 11/17/2023.

EFFECTIVE DATE	BASIC	HOSPITAL	LOSS OF USE	ANAT. LOSS	OTHER LOSS
11/17/2023	48	48	00	00	0

CODE SHEET

NOT SERVICE CONNECTED NOT SUBJECT TO COMPENSATION (8.NSCPeacetime)

5260 RIGHT KNEE [Agent Orange - Vietnam/Other/Unknown-Agent Orange]
 Not Service Connected, Peacetime, No Diagnosis

Original Date of Denial: 03/18/2020

5260 LEFT KNEE [Agent Orange - Vietnam/Other/Unknown-Agent Orange]
 Not Service Connected, Peacetime, No Diagnosis

Original Date of Denial: 03/18/2020

5276 PLANTAR FASCIITIS BILATERAL
 Not Service Connected, Peacetime, Not Incurred/Caused by Service

Original Date of Denial: 12/06/2018

6099-6009 EYE INFECTION
 Not Service Connected, Peacetime, Not Established by Presumption

Original Date of Denial: 03/18/2020

NOTIFICATION LETTER

Use this date for Appeal Purposes



June 18, 2025



We made a decision on your VA benefits.

Dear [REDACTED]:

This letter will guide you through the information you should know and steps you may take now that VA has made a decision about your benefits.

Your Benefit Information:

- Evaluation of bilateral hearing loss, which is currently 10 percent disabling, is increased to 30 percent effective April 17, 2025.

Your combined rating evaluation is:

Combined Rating Evaluation	Effective Date
10%	Jun 29, 2009
80%	Mar 20, 2020
20%	Feb 1, 2022
90%	Apr 1, 2022
90%	Sep 19, 2024
90%	Apr 17, 2025



We have included with this letter:

1. Explanation of Payment
2. Additional Benefits
3. Where to Send Your Correspondence
4. VA Form 20-0998
5. Rating Decision
6. Fraud Prevention Attachment

Contact information:

Web: www.va.gov
 Phone: 1-800-827-1000
 TDD: 711
 To send questions online: visit <https://ask.va.gov/>

Social Media:

Twitter: @VAVetBenefits
 Facebook: www.facebook.com/VeteransBenefits

Your representative:

You appointed AMERICAN RED CROSS as your accredited representative. They have also received a copy of this letter.

They can help you with any questions you have about your claim.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, call the *Veterans Crisis Line* by dialing 988 and then pressing 1.

NOTIFICATION LETTER

Explanation of Payment

We are currently paying you as a single Veteran with no dependents.

Please Take Action: What Things Affect Your Right to Payment?

Please notify VA *immediately* if there is a change in any condition affecting your right to continued payments. If you don't notify us of these changes immediately, you may have to return any overpayments. Those changes include:

Evidence received shows a change is warranted.
<p>Military Pay or Worker's Compensation: Your payments may be affected by the following, which you must bring to our attention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reentrance into active military or naval service. • Receipt of armed forces service retirement pay, unless your retirement pay has already been reduced because of award of disability compensation. • Receipt of benefits from the Office of Federal Employees Compensation. • Receipt of active duty or drill pay as a reservist or member of the National Guard.
<p>Dependents: If you have a disability rating of 30 percent or more, you must advise VA of any change with your spouse or children.</p>
<p>Hospitalization: If your award includes Aid and Attendance benefits, we may reduce this additional allowance if you are admitted to a hospital, nursing home, or domiciliary care at VA expense.</p>
<p>Incarceration: Benefits will be reduced if you are incarcerated in a federal, state, or local penal institution for more than 60 days for conviction of a felony.</p>
<p>Lack of Cooperation: We may stop monthly payments if you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fail to submit evidence we requested, • fail to attend a VA examination when requested, or • Submit false or fraudulent evidence to VA, or cause false or fraudulent evidence to be submitted to VA.
<p>Fraud/Lying to Government: The law provides severe penalties, which include fines, imprisonment, or both, for the fraudulent acceptance of any payment to which you are not entitled. We may verify information you submit through computer-matching programs with other agencies.</p>

Additional Benefits

Medical Care and Treatment:

- **Mental Health Counseling:** For more information, please visit www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-

AMA REQUIREMENTS FOR RO DECISIONS

- The info below must be included as part of RO decisions issued under the AMA, and can be incorporated into the rating decision, associated notice letter, and enclosed standardized forms:
 - 1. Identification of the issues adjudicated**
 - 2. A summary of the evidence considered by VA**
 - 3. A summary of the applicable laws and regs**
 - 4. A listing of any findings by the adjudicator that are favorable to the claimant**

AMA REQUIREMENTS FOR RO DECISIONS

- 5. For denied claims, identification of the claim elements that were not met**
 - 6. If applicable, identification of the criteria required to grant service connection or the next higher level of compensation**
 - 7. An explanation of how to obtain or access evidence used in making the decision**
 - 8. A summary of the options available for the claimant to seek further review of the decision**
- 38 U.S.C. § 5105(b); 38 C.F.R. § 3.103(f); *Cowan v. McDonough*, 35 Vet. App. 232, 244 (2022)



AMA REQUIREMENTS FOR RO DECISIONS

#1 IDENTIFICATION OF THE ISSUES ADJUDICATED

DECISION

1. Entitlement to individual unemployability is denied.
2. Service connection for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is denied.
3. The previous denial of service connection for bilateral hearing loss is confirmed and continued.
4. The previous denial of service connection for tinnitus (previously rated as ringing in ears) is confirmed and continued.

AMA REQUIREMENTS FOR RO DECISIONS

#2 SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE CONSIDERED BY VA

EVIDENCE

- VA Form 21-526 EZ: Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits, received December 15, 2014
- Service Treatment and Personnel Records received April 9, 2015, for the period December 1968 to December 1970
- Rating Decision, dated June 24, 2015
- Electronic Intent to File, received August 25, 2023
- VA Form 21-526 EZ: Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits, received September 1, 2023
- VA Form 21-8940, Veteran's Application For Increased Compensation Based On Unemployability, received September 1, 2023
- VA Form 21-0781a, Statement In Support Of Claim For Service Connection For Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Secondary To Personal Trauma, received September 1, 2023
- VA Form 21-4138, Statement in Support of Claim, received September 1, 2023
- VA Form 20-0995, Decision Review Request: Supplemental Claim, received September 14, 2023
- VA Form 21-4138, Statement in Support of Claim, received September 14, 2023
- VA Letter Concerning Your Claim, dated September 21, 2023
- Initial PTSD Disability Benefits Questionnaire, VES contractor, conducted October 9, 2023
- VA Form 21-4138, Statement in Support of Claim, received October 17, 2023
- Hearing loss and tinnitus Disability Benefits Questionnaire, QTC contractor, conducted November 6, 2023
- Toxic Exposure Risk Activity (TERA) memorandum, dated November 22, 2023
- Rating Decision, dated November 22, 2023
- Social Security Administration Records, received December 6, 2023
- Medical Opinion Disability Benefits Questionnaire, QTC contractor, conducted December 12, 2023
- Valley Coastal Bend VAMC (Veterans Affairs Medical Center) treatment records, for the period December 19, 2018 to December 27, 2023



AMA REQUIREMENTS FOR RO DECISIONS

#3 SUMMARY OF THE APPLICABLE LAWS AND REGULATIONS

8. Service connection for left shoulder strain (claimed as bilateral arms).

Service connection may be granted for a disability which began in military service or was caused by some event or experience in service. (38 CFR 3.303) ←

A direct grant of service connection requires: 1) medical evidence of a current disability, 2) evidence of the incurrence or aggravation of a disease or injury in active military service, and 3) medical evidence of a nexus (link) between the current disability and the in-service disease or injury. (38 CFR 3.303, 38 CFR 3.304) ←

The evidence does not show an event, disease or injury in service. Your service treatment records do not contain complaints, treatment, or diagnosis for this condition. There was no continuity of symptoms from service to the present. We did not find a link between your medical condition and military service. (38 CFR 3.303, 38 CFR 3.304) ←

Service connection for left shoulder strain is denied since this condition neither occurred in nor was caused by service. (38 CFR 3.303, 38 CFR 3.304) ←

Favorable Findings identified in this decision:

You have been diagnosed with a disability. VA contract examination conducted on June 21, 2024 confirms a current diagnosis of left shoulder strain.



AMA REQUIREMENTS FOR RO DECISIONS

#3 SUMMARY OF THE APPLICABLE LAWS AND REGULATIONS

Laws and regulations applicable to this issue:

- 38 CFR §3.1 Definitions.
- 38 CFR §3.102 Reasonable doubt.
- 38 CFR §3.103 Procedural due process and appellate rights.
- 38 CFR §3.105 Revision of decisions.
- 38 CFR §3.151 Claims for disability benefits.
- 38 CFR §3.155 How to file a claim.
- 38 CFR §3.159 Department of Veterans Affairs assistance in developing claims.
- 38 CFR §3.321 General rating considerations.
- 38 CFR §3.340 Total and permanent total ratings and unemployability.
- 38 CFR §3.341 Total disability ratings for compensation purposes.
- 38 CFR §3.343 Continuance of total disability ratings.
- 38 CFR §3.353 Determinations of incompetency and competency.
- 38 CFR §3.400 Effective Dates - General.
- 38 CFR §3.2500 Review of decisions.
- 38 CFR §4.1 Essentials of evaluative rating.
- 38 CFR §4.2 Interpretation of examination reports.
- 38 CFR §4.3 Resolution of reasonable doubt.
- 38 CFR §4.6 Evaluation of evidence.
- 38 CFR §4.7 Higher of two evaluations.
- 38 CFR §4.15 Total disability ratings.
- 38 CFR §4.16 Total disability ratings for compensation based on unemployability of the individual.
- 38 CFR §4.18 Unemployability.
- 38 CFR §4.19 Age in service-connected claims.
- 38 CFR §4.125 Diagnosis of mental disorders.
- 38 CFR §4.126 Evaluation of disability from mental disorders.
- 38 CFR §4.130 Schedule of ratings—Mental disorders.

**From a July 2025
Rating Decision,
not previously
included as a list**

AMA REQUIREMENTS FOR RO DECISIONS

#4 LISTING OF FAVORABLE FINDINGS

8. Service connection for left shoulder strain (claimed as bilateral arms).

Service connection may be granted for a disability which began in military service or was caused by some event or experience in service. (38 CFR 3.303)

A direct grant of service connection requires: 1) medical evidence of a current disability, 2) evidence of the incurrence or aggravation of a disease or injury in active military service, and 3) medical evidence of a nexus (link) between the current disability and the in-service disease or injury. (38 CFR 3.303, 38 CFR 3.304)

The evidence does not show an event, disease or injury in service. Your service treatment records do not contain complaints, treatment, or diagnosis for this condition. There was no continuity of symptoms from service to the present. We did not find a link between your medical condition and military service. (38 CFR 3.303, 38 CFR 3.304)

Service connection for left shoulder strain is denied since this condition neither occurred in nor was caused by service. (38 CFR 3.303, 38 CFR 3.304)

Favorable Findings identified in this decision:

You have been diagnosed with a disability. VA contract examination conducted on June 21, 2024 confirms a current diagnosis of left shoulder strain.

AMA REQUIREMENTS FOR RO DECISIONS

#4 LISTING OF FAVORABLE FINDINGS

Favorable Findings identified in this decision:

The evidence shows that a qualifying event, injury, or disease had its onset during your service. Noise exposure as a qualifying event is conceded based on your Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) of Morse Interceptor.

You have been diagnosed with a disability. VA contract examination conducted on June 26, 2024 confirms a current diagnosis of tinnitus.

AMA REQUIREMENTS FOR RO DECISIONS

#5 FOR DENIED CLAIMS, IDENTIFICATION OF CLAIM ELEMENTS THAT WERE NOT MET

8. Service connection for left shoulder strain (claimed as bilateral arms).

Service connection may be granted for a disability which began in military service or was caused by some event or experience in service. (38 CFR 3.303)

A direct grant of service connection requires: 1) medical evidence of a current disability, 2) evidence of the incurrence or aggravation of a disease or injury in active military service, and 3) medical evidence of a nexus (link) between the current disability and the in-service disease or injury. (38 CFR 3.303, 38 CFR 3.304)

The evidence does not show an event, disease or injury in service. Your service treatment records do not contain complaints, treatment, or diagnosis for this condition. There was no continuity of symptoms from service to the present. We did not find a link between your medical condition and military service. (38 CFR 3.303, 38 CFR 3.304)

Service connection for left shoulder strain is denied since this condition neither occurred in nor was caused by service. (38 CFR 3.303, 38 CFR 3.304)

Favorable Findings identified in this decision:

You have been diagnosed with a disability. VA contract examination conducted on June 21, 2024 confirms a current diagnosis of left shoulder strain.

AMA REQUIREMENTS FOR RO DECISIONS

#6 IDENTIFICATION OF CRITERIA REQUIRED TO GRANT SC OR THE NEXT HIGHER RATING

REASONS FOR DECISION

1. Service connection for left knee strain (claimed as bilateral knees, and arthritis).

Service connection for left knee strain has been established as directly related to military service. (38 CFR 3.303, 38 CFR 3.304)

An evaluation of 10 percent is assigned from February 1, 2024. Service connection has been established from the day VA received your claim. When a claim of service connection is received more than one year after discharge from active duty, the effective date is the date VA received the claim. (38 CFR 3.400)

We have assigned a 10 percent evaluation for your left knee strain based on:

- Limitation of extension of 10 to 14 degrees

The provisions of 38 CFR §4.40 and §4.45 concerning functional loss due to pain, fatigue, weakness, or lack of endurance, incoordination, and flare-ups, as cited in *DeLuca v. Brown* and *Mitchell v. Shinseki*, have been considered and are not warranted.

A higher evaluation of 20 percent is not warranted for limitation of extension of the knee unless the evidence shows:

- Limitation of extension of 15 to 19 degrees. (38 CFR 4.71a)

AMA REQUIREMENTS FOR RO DECISIONS

#7 HOW TO OBTAIN OR ACCESS EVIDENCE USED IN MAKING THE DECISION

increased evaluation. However, if you disagree with a decision made within the last year, please refer to the enclosed VA Form 20-0998, *Your Right To Seek Review Of Our Decision*. If you would like us to review a claim that was denied more than one year ago, and you have new and relevant evidence for us to consider, please use VA Form 20-0995, *Decision Review Request: Supplemental Claim*.

If you would like to obtain or access evidence used in making this decision, please contact us by telephone, email, or letter as noted below letting us know what you would like to obtain. Some evidence may be obtained online by visiting www.va.gov.

You may also use the following link to access your Public Contact representative at your local VA Regional Office for assistance at <https://va.my.site.com/VAVERA/s/>.

Thank you for your service,

Regional Office Director

Found in Notification Letter

AMA REQUIREMENTS FOR RO DECISIONS

#8 SUMMARY OF OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO SEEK FURTHER REVIEW OF THE DECISION

What You Should Do If You Disagree With Our Decision

If you do not agree with our decision, you have one year from the date of this letter to select a review option to protect your initial filing date for effective date purposes. You must file your request on the required application form for the review option desired. The table below represents the review options and their respective required application form.

Review Option	Required Application Form
Supplemental Claim	VA Form 20-0995, <i>Decision Review Request: Supplemental Claim</i>
Higher-Level Review	VA Form 20-0996, <i>Decision Review Request: Higher-Level Review</i>
Appeal to the Board of Veterans' Appeals	VA Form 10182, <i>Decision Review Request: Board Appeal (Notice of Disagreement)</i>

*Found in
Notification
Letter*

Please note: You **may not** request a higher-level review of a higher-level review decision issued by VA.

The enclosed VA Form 20-0998, *Your Right To Seek Review Of Our Decision*, explains your options in greater detail and provides instructions on how to request further review. You may download a copy of any of the required application forms noted above by visiting www.va.gov/vaforms/, or you may contact us by telephone at 1-800-827-1000 and we will mail you any form you need.

You can visit www.va.gov/decision-reviews to learn more about how the disagreement process works.

Important: If you have a service-connected condition which you feel has worsened and is no

longer accurately reflected by the level of disability assigned, please use VA Form 21-526EZ, *Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits* to request an increased evaluation. However, if you disagree with a decision made within the last year, please refer to the enclosed VA Form 20-0998, *Your Right To Seek Review Of Our Decision*. If you would like us to review a claim that was denied more than one year ago, and you have new and relevant evidence for us to consider, please use VA Form 20-0995, *Decision Review Request: Supplemental Claim*.

AMA REQUIREMENTS FOR RO DECISIONS

#8 SUMMARY OF OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO SEEK FURTHER REVIEW OF THE DECISION

Where to Send Your Correspondence

Documents may be submitted by mail, in person at a VA regional office or electronically. However, VA recommends submitting correspondence electronically as this is the fastest method of receipt.

VA provides several tools to assist in electronic submission. To learn more about how to submit documents and claims electronically, visit www.va.gov/disability/upload-supporting-evidence. You can also go directly to access.va.gov to digitally upload any correspondence using QuickSubmit.

By visiting www.va.gov you can also check your claim status and learn about other VA benefits.

If you need assistance, you can find a local, accredited representative at <https://www.benefits.va.gov/vso/>.

If you prefer to mail your correspondence, please use the related mailing address below:

<p>Compensation Benefits Department of Veterans Affairs Compensation Intake Center P.O. Box 4444 Janesville, WI 53547 Toll Free Phone: 1-800-827-1000 Toll Free Fax: (844) 531-7818</p>	<p>Pension & Survivors Benefits Department of Veterans Affairs Pension Intake Center P.O. Box 5365 Janesville, WI 53547 Toll Free Phone: 1-800-827-1000 Toll Free Fax: (844) 655-1604</p>
<p>Board of Veterans' Appeals Department of Veterans Affairs Board of Veterans' Appeals P.O. Box 27063 Washington, DC 20038 Toll Free Phone: (844) 678-8979</p>	<p>Fiduciary Department of Veterans Affairs Fiduciary Intake Center P.O. Box 5211 Janesville, WI 53547 Toll Free Phone: 1-800-827-1000 Toll Free Fax: (888) 581-6826</p>




These addresses serve all United States and foreign locations.

<p>Veterans Crisis Line: Dial 988 then Press 1</p>	<p>You can also send a text message to 838255 to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. For more information, visit www.veteranscrisisline.net</p>
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YOUR RIGHT TO SEEK REVIEW OF OUR DECISION

This document outlines your right to seek review of our decision on any issue with which you disagree. You may generally select one of three different review options for each issue decided by VA. However, you may not request review of the same issue using more than one option at the same time. Below is information on the three different review options.

	Supplemental Claim	Higher-Level Review	Board Appeal
What Is This ?	A reviewer will determine whether new and relevant evidence changes the prior decision.	An experienced claims adjudicator will review your decision using the same evidence VA considered in the prior decision.	A Veterans Law Judge at the Board of Veterans' Appeals (Board) will review your decision.
By Selecting This Option	VA will assist you in gathering new and relevant evidence that you identify to support your claim. You are entitled to a hearing at any time in the supplemental claim process.	You have no additional evidence to submit to support your claim, but you believe there was an error in the prior decision. You can request an optional, one-time, informal conference with a Higher-Level Reviewer to identify specific errors in the case, although requesting this conference may delay the review.	You must choose a docket: Direct Review - You do not want to submit evidence or have a hearing. Evidence Submission - You choose to submit additional evidence without a hearing. Hearing - You choose to have a hearing with a Veterans Law Judge.
Goal To Complete	125 days on average	125 days on average	385 days on average for Direct Review (longer for the other options)
Form To File*	VA Form 20-0985 Decision Review Request: Supplemental Claim	VA Form 20-0996 Decision Review Request: Higher-Level Review	VA Form 10182 Decision Review Request: Board Appeal (Notice of Disagreement)
Scan QR Code to Access Form			
Further Options After This Decision Review	You may request another Supplemental Claim, a Higher-Level Review, or a Board Appeal.	You may request a Supplemental Claim or a Board Appeal.	You may request a Supplemental Claim or appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

For most VA benefits, you have 1 year from the date on your decision notice to request a decision review to ensure the earliest possible effective date. Consult your decision notice for specific limitations.

* All forms listed are available at www.va.gov/ind-forms/ or use your mobile device camera to scan the QR code to take you directly to the form you select.

If you do not submit a decision review request within the required time, you may only seek review through the following:

- A request to revise the decision based on a clear and unmistakable error; or
- A Supplemental Claim. If you file a Supplemental Claim after the 1-year time limit, the effective date for any resulting award of benefits generally will be tied to the date VA receives the Supplemental Claim.

If you wish to have a hearing during the supplemental claim process, you can contact us online through Ask VA: <https://ask.va.gov/> or call us toll-free at 1-800-827-1000 (TTY: 711).

While most decision review options are available to you, there are limitations based on the type of decision you received.

- If you are a party to a **contested claim** - such as claims for appointment, attorney fee disagreement, or multiple parties filing for survivor's benefits or claims for life insurance - your only option for disagreeing with your decision is to file a Board Appeal within **60 days** of the date on your decision notice.
- If you are seeking review of an **insurance decision** you have an additional option to challenge VA's decision by filing a complaint with a United States district court in the jurisdiction in which you reside within 6 years from when the right of action first accrues. Consult your decision notice for details on what options are available and where to send the request.

Get Help with Your Review Request:

For more information on all the available review options, contact us at 1-800-827-1000 or visit www.va.gov/decision-review/. If you need help filing a decision review, you may want to work with an accredited attorney, claims agent, or a Veterans Service Organization (VSO) representative. Additional information about working with an accredited attorney, claims agent, or VSO representative is available at www.va.gov/decision-review/get-help-with-revision-request/. You can find a searchable database of VA-recognized representatives at www.va.gov/vetppsp/accreditation.

Scan the QR Code to Open the Appropriate Decision Review Website Page



Found with Notification Letter

QUESTIONS?

