

How to Expedite VA Claims

Nashville VA Regional Office

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VA



U.S. Department
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How to Expedite VA Claims Overview

- **Rated Claims**
- **Non-Rated Claims**
- **Q & A**

Expediting Rating Claims: Overview

What are the biggest problems?

- **R**ecords
- **D**isabilities
- **P**rocedures

What excludes a claim from FDC?

- All of the above



Expediting Rating Claims: **Records**

- Federal
- Private



Expediting Rating Claims: Records

- Federal
 - Exact dates not Estimated
 - VBA will continue development for the entire period referenced until records are provided or a negative response is received.
 - If Veteran does not remember dates, it is better to reference a later known date than an earlier estimated one.
 - Example: Veteran initial VAMC appointment on December 1, 2019 but cannot remember and states, “VAMC Nashville from January 1, 2019 to Present.” Better to indicate December 31, 2019.
 - Recent spike in STRs listed as private medical records.

Expediting Rating Claims: Records

- Private
 - Veteran should submit private treatment records along with prescribed claim form, do not also submit a VAF 21-4142 or 4142a.
 - If all information is submitted, check the box, and/or provide a statement that “I have no additional evidence to submit, please rate my claim based on the evidence of record.”



Expediting Rating Claims: Disabilities

- The Three (3) Essential Elements of Service Connection:
 1. Current Diagnosed Disability
 2. In-Service Event, Injury, or Illness
 3. Nexus - Continuity of Treatment:
 - Medical Opinion Can Provide Nexus
- Submit concise disabilities.
 - General, complex, and vague equal additional development.
- Clarify the location or symptom(s) of disability.
 - For example: Left knee pain – Not knee, or just left knee.

Expediting Rating Claims: Disabilities

- Examples of other concise disabilities include:
 - Diabetes (Type I or Type II)
 - Right wrist fracture residuals
 - Residuals of left index finger compound fracture
 - Left knee pain
 - Bilateral knee pain
- Examples of general, complex, and vague disabilities include:
 - High sugar in service after I gained weight from PTSD
 - Wrist
 - Finger
 - Leg
 - My joints hurt all the time, which makes my blood pressure rise and heart palpitate

Expediting Rating Claims: **Poll**

Expediting Claims Poll 1



Expediting Rating Claims: Disabilities

- More contentions do not always equal higher rating
 - Sometimes less is more.
 - More contentions can lead to more VA Examinations (VAE), more development, more clarification, etc.
- Secondary contentions should include secondary language and not assume VBA will consider a claim as secondary.
- Gulf War – even though undiagnosed multi-symptom illness may exist; a disability must be clearly stated.
 - Example: “respiratory condition,” I have trouble breathing.
 - A medical diagnosis is helpful.

Expediting Rating Claims: Procedures

- 5103
 - Ensure 5103 notices are provided
 - review folder for 5103 in last year.
 - If POA signs claim for veteran, send the 5103-notice response along with it:
 - If not, a 5103 notice and 30-day suspense result.
 - Note: Sometimes, claims get all the way to the award and cannot be promulgated because no 5103 notice was provided to the Veteran.
 - POAs cannot check 5103 provided box and sign 0995 or 0996.
 - Understand **I.1.B.1.I. Exceptions to the Notification Requirement**

Expediting Rating Claims: Procedures

- New and relevant evidence
 - Help Veteran understand what it means by new and relevant evidence for supplemental claims.
- Multiple submissions
 - Result in initial development cycle starting over
 - Submit ITF instead
- Previously denied
 - Claim should be submitted on 0995 or 0996, not a 526.



Expediting Rating Claims: Procedures

- VAF 21-0781 Statement in Support of Claim for Service Connection for PTSD
 - If a 60-day period is required, then 0781 must include the period claimed.
 - Provide name/unit of person associated with stressor (e.g., E-4 Tom Jones, unit assigned).
 - Stressor verification requires, specifics: Who, What, Where, and When.
- Private DBQs still require claims folder review. If folder is not reviewed by Examiner, the DBQ is not sufficient for rating purposes.



Expediting Non-Rating Claims: Overview

What are the biggest problems?

- The most common reasons are not granted as submitted is compliance with the forms' instructions
- Claims are missing required documentation

What are other problems?

Expediting Non-Rating Claims: Biggest Problems

- Forms are missing data
 - VA Form 21-686c, *Application Request To Add And/Or Remove Dependents*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The table below provides a guide to the instructions and the application. The completion of certain sections of this application are required. Be aware that you *must* complete **Section I - Veteran/Claimant's Identification Information** and **Section X - Beneficiary/Claimant's Certification and Signature**. If these sections are not complete, we will *not* be able to process your claim for additional benefits for dependents. Otherwise, complete the remaining sections that apply to you.

If you are ...	Instructions	Application
claiming additional benefits for a spouse	Pages 3 and 4	Pages 8 and 9
claiming additional benefits for a child	Pages 4 - 5	Pages 10 and 11

- September 2018 VA Form 21-686c missing information will be denied
- If this occurs, the best claim form to use to provide the missing information is VA Form 20-0995, *Decision Review Request: Supplemental Claim*
 - If received within one year of decision, protects original date of claim
- If a new (& complete) VA Form 21-686c is received, effective date is based on the new form's date of claim & other regulatory guidance
- Phone calls to NCC or VA Forms 21-4138 will result in a Request for Application

Expediting Non-Rating Claims: Biggest Problems

- Forms have partial information
 - State, but not city / town or county (unless a well-known city, such as New York City)
 - Year but not month and date or year and month but not the date
 - Step-children’s biological relationship with the spouse is not marked
 - Dependents’ social security numbers missing (and not living overseas)
 - “High School” instead of full name of school
 - Missing school address information

If there is a block on a form, the general requirement is that information is complete
and
applicable blocks are filled in or addressed as described on the form or instructions.

Expediting Non-Rating Claims: Biggest Problems

What prevents a claim from being processed as submitted?

- Certain claims have unique requirements for needed documentation
 - Dependency
 - Certain spousal situations including Common-Law, Tribal or Proxy Marriages
 - Adoption and certain step-child situations
 - Parental Dependency
 - School-Age Children
 - Children Incapable of Self-Support
 - Drill Pay and Active Duty within the same year
 - Need military orders or DD Form 214



Expediting Non-Rating Claims: Other Problems

Communication with Call Centers that do not provide all required information

- For example, stating “No changes to dependents” is not sufficient for Dependency Verification
- Example of ideal:

In response to VA Form 21-0538 dated (1/31/2021) the Veteran reports change to the status of dependent(s)

Veteran/beneficiary requests removal the following dependent

Name of dependent: BILLIE JEAN

Relationship: EX SPOUSE

Reason for removal: DIVORCE

Date, of death or divorce: 1/18/2019

Place in of Divorce or Death: UPPER MARLBRO

10A. Full Name of Child: MASON

10B. Date of Birth: 5/14/2011

10C. Place of Birth: PRINCE GEORGIA COUNTY FL

10D. Social Security Number: N/A

10E. Child's Relationship (biological,)

10F. Name and Address of Person Having Custody of Child: veteran

10A. Full Name of Child: arianna

10B. Date of Birth: 3/20/2009

10C. Place of Birth: Birmingham al

10D. Social Security Number: N/a

10E. Child's Relationship (biological,)

10F. Name and Address of Person Having Custody of Child: veteran

Expediting Non-Rating Claims: Claim Form Changes

VA Forms

Department of Veterans Affairs

Welcome to the Department of Veterans Affairs Forms web site.

IMPORTANT: You must have the latest version of Adobe Reader on your computer to fully utilize all the forms on this site. You can download software at: [Free Adobe Reader Download](#). (Note: By clicking on Free Adobe Reader Download link, you will leave the Department of Veterans Affairs Website. VA does not endorse and is not responsible for the content of the linked website)

Forms on this site are available in several formats. Fillable pdf can be filled on-line, printed, saved and edited. XFT forms can be filled on-line, printed, and saved to your pc but cannot be edited later (**TURN OFF YOUR POP-UP BLOCKER TO USE XFT**). Some PDF are printable blank forms. Some forms are fillable using JetForm filler. If you have this product on your computer may choose the JetForm version.

To find a form, enter the form number (example: 12-1234 or 1234) or a word from the form's title or subject.

Form Number:

Title / Keyword(s):

Sort By:

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Number	Title	Issue Date	Revision Date	# Pages
08-3385a	Construction Change Order Cost Summary (Prime Contractor)	01/03/2000		1
08-3385b	Construction Change Order Cost Summary (Subcontractor)	01/03/2000		1



Expediting Non-Rating Claims: Claim Form Changes

- Dependency Claims – VA Form 21-686c, Sep 2018
- Dependency Verification - VA Form 21-0538, Feb 2021

SECTION II: STATUS CERTIFICATION	
8. HAS THE STATUS OF YOUR DEPENDENT(S) CHANGED?	<input type="radio"/> YES <input type="radio"/> NO
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ If "Yes," complete the section below that refers to the dependent(s) whose status has changed.○ If "No," sign this form (Section V) and disregard the remaining sections of this form.	
NOTE: If you have additional dependents not listed on the letter attached to this form, complete and submit VA Form 21-686c, <i>Application Request to Add and/or Remove Dependents</i> , and if claiming a child aged 18-23 years and in school, complete VA Form 21-674, <i>Request for Approval of School Attendance</i> . VA forms are available at www.va.gov/vaforms .	

- Parental Dependency, VA Form 21P-509, Apr 2021

Please read the instructions, notes, and the fine print

Expediting Non-Rating Claims: Other Issues

- Audit Requests
 - Please clearly articulate what is the issue or concern
 - If correspondence does not say “Audit Request”, then it is a request for information
 - Financial audits can only go back 7 years due to lack of US Treasury records
- Supplemental Claim VA Form 20-0995 – sometimes misrouted

What is the Benefit Type?

- Compensation
- Pension & Survivor's Benefits
- Fiduciary
- Insurance
- Education
- Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment
- Loan Guaranty
- Veterans Health Administration
- National Cemetery Administration

Ensure the entry in the “Specific Issue(s)” blocks are:

- Specific
- Concise

Ensure the Date of VA Notice is entered

Expediting Non-Rating Claims: Other Issues

- Drill Pay
 - One set of rules for drill pay adjustments for FY 2016 and earlier
 - Another set of rules for drill pay adjustments for FY 2017, 2018, and 2019
 - Third set of rules for drill pay adjustments for FY 2020 and newer
 - Drill Pay Form is the VA Form 21-8951-2, dated Jan 2020
- Changes involve
 - How mixtures of drill pay and active duty are calculated
 - Original awards and changes in rates / payments within a Fiscal Year
 - Authority to use certain Veterans Information Solution (VIS) information

Veteran provided military orders and DD 214s can assist us!

Expediting Non-Rating Claims: Poll Question

Expediting Claims Poll 2



Expediting VA Claims Summary

Ask Here ...

