

TDVS Benefits Bulletin
23-4

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This month's bulletin is 1,622 words and will take just over 6 minutes of your time.

1 big thing: Date Change - TDVS Annual Training Conference 2023 - "Serving Those Who Served"

DATE CHANGE - Monday, October 2nd to Wednesday, October 4th

Mark your calendars! TDVS Annual Conference 2023 will **NOW** be held **October 2nd - 4th**, 2023. It will still be in Knoxville, Tennessee but will be held at the **Marriott Knoxville Downtown**, 525 Henley Street, Knoxville, TN 37902.



TDVS Updates

Grant Opportunity - Share with Your Community Partners

Grant funding is now available through the Staff Sergeant Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program.

Why it matters: Tennessee's Veteran suicide rate is too high. [Tennessee's Veteran suicide rate](#) is higher than both the National and Southern Region Veteran suicide rates.

The purpose of the SSG Fox SPGP is to reduce Veteran suicide by expanding suicide prevention programs for Veterans through the award of suicide prevention services grants

to eligible entities to provide or coordinate the provision of suicide prevention services to eligible individuals and their families.

Additional resources:

- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [VA Fact Sheet](#)

TDVS Town Hall



Training Updates

What's next:

- May Lunch and Learn, May 10th, 11:30 to 12:30 p.m. CST
 - TN State Parks and TN Dept. of Transportation Veteran Programs
- June Lunch and Learn, June 14th, 11:30 to 12:30 p.m. CST
 - Veterans Online Debt Access Overview and Strategic Roadmap
- July Quarterly Training, NVLSP Webinar, Available Monday, July 10th – Friday, July 14th
 - Understanding CRSC and CRDP
- New Service Officer Accreditation Course, July 24 – 28
- [2023 Training Schedule](#)

PACT Act Toolbox – Updates

TDVS has created a [PACT Act Toolbox](#) to help you serve Tennessee Veterans and their families. It's an advocate's one-stop shop for all things PACT Act –

- VA Fact Sheets
- VA Web Resources
- TDVS Fact Sheet
- TDVS FAQs
- Bill Text, Summaries, and More
- Training Resources

What's new:

- [Proposed Rule – Reevaluation of Claims for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation](#)

VA has published a [proposed rule](#) in the Federal Register to incorporate the legislative changes enacted by the *Honoring our PACT Act of 2022* that allow certain claimants to receive retroactive compensation when they elect to have certain previously denied DIC claims reevaluated.

- [Six Months Remaining in PACT Act Special Enrollment for Post 9/11 Combat Veterans](#)

The PACT Act created new windows of VA health care eligibility for Post 9/11 combat Veterans. The first window of eligibility—a one-year special enrollment period that began on October 1, 2022—now only has six months remaining. To enroll, you must have:

- Served on active duty in a theater of combat operations during a period of war after the Persian Gulf War, or
- Served in combat against a hostile force during a period of hostilities after November 11, 1998

And you must have:

- Been discharged or released between September 11, 2001, and October 1, 2013, and
- Not previously enrolled in VA health care.

VA and Veteran Benefit Updates

VA, NIH Launch Study of Gulf War Illness

VA and the National Institutes of Health have launched a five-year study to explain the chronic symptoms of Gulf War Illness.

Why it matters: This disease affects about a third of the men and women who served in the Persian Gulf during operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm and affects multiple body symptoms. The study may lead to more definitive diagnostic criteria for Gulf War Illness, development of new diagnostic testing and potential treatments.

Learn more here:

- [VA Press Release](#)
- [VA-NIH Project](#)
- [NVLSP Presentation](#) on Gulf War Illness Claims from 2019 TDVS Annual Conference

VA Life Insurance Update

Earlier this year the new VALife program opened and the Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (S-DVI) program closed to new enrollment as of December 31, 2022.

Why it matters: Insurance Service is no longer accepting applications for S-DVI or Supplemental S-DVI and:

- TDVS removed the S-DVI application (VA Form 29-4364) or Supplemental S-DVI application (VA Form 29-0188 and VA Form 29-0189) from VetraSpec;
- Discontinuing submission of S-DVI or Supplemental S-DVI applications through Document Upload, mail, or any other means

- Helping inform Veterans already insured under S-DVI that they have the option to keep their S-DVI or switch to VALife. More information is available at: <https://www.va.gov/life-insurance/options-eligibility/s-dvi/>.

VALife has no time limit to apply for Veterans age 80 and under, and does not require any health questions or medical exams to apply. Information about the VALife program can be found on VA's website at <https://www.va.gov/life-insurance/options-eligibility/valife/>.

Resources:

- Veterans interested in applying for VALife can apply using the following link: <https://insurance.va.gov/VALIFE>.
- [TDVS June 2022 Lunch & Learn: VA Insurance](#)

Separation Health Assessments

VA and DOD have updated the Separation Health Assessment (SAH) to achieve a single common comprehensive examination that serves the needs of VA and DOD.

Why it matters: Starting April 1, 2023, all separating Service Members participating in the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) or Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) are required to complete VA's SHA – Part A Self-Assessment when submitting a VA disability claim.

Here's more:

- [VA Blog Post](#)
- [VA M-21-1, Adjudication Procedures Manual](#) – Updated the week of April 3, 2023, to include use of SHA, Part A.

Exceptions to Bilateral Factor

VA has published an [interim final rule](#) that provides exceptions to applying the bilateral factor in VA disability calculations.

Why it matters: The amendment allows VA adjudicators to exclude certain disabilities that would be calculated using the bilateral factor to determine the combined evaluation if, by their exclusion, a higher combined evaluation could be achieved.

I need more information:

- **What does the regulation do?** This interim final rulemaking amends the regulation governing the bilateral factor for diseases and injuries of both arms, both legs, or paired skeletal muscles.
- **Who does it impact?** The interim final rule impacts certain veterans with bilateral factor diseases and injuries of both arms, both legs, or paired skeletal muscles who have a current combined rating of 90%.
 - **VA will adjust the affected combined evaluations of running awards effective on April 16, 2023 without requiring a claim.**
- **Why is VA doing it?** VA is changing this portion of the VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities to ensure affected veterans receive the appropriate level of compensation that their disabilities warrant.
- [See 38 C.F.R. 4.26](#)

VA Is Resuming In-Person Home Visits for the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers

After May 11, 2023, all required home visits for the purpose of PCAFC must be completed in-person.

Background: VA relaxed certain requirements related to in-person home visits required for PCAFC, for the duration of the National Emergency related to COVID-19. The relaxed requirements included VA's ability to complete required home visits virtually through telehealth.

The requirement for in-person home visits will again apply after May 11, 2023 to:

- Initial home-care assessments required as part of the evaluation for PCAFC eligibility. This assessment must be conducted before VA can approve and designate a Family Caregiver.
- Home visits that may be required as part of reassessments.
- Wellness Contacts, generally occurring every 120 days, which are required for PCAFC participation. Wellness Contacts may be conducted via telephone, clinical video telehealth, face-to-face at a VA facility, or in the eligible Veteran's home. At least one visit must occur in the eligible Veteran's home on an annual basis.

VA is already conducting in-person home visits in many areas. Local VA medical facility Caregiver Support Program (CSP) staff will continue communicating these requirements with Veterans and Family Caregivers over the coming weeks.

Important note: The end of the National Emergency does not impact the suspension of reassessments for PCAFC eligibility that was announced in June 2022.

Practice Like a Pro

Improved Pension and Social Security Income Matches

The failure to report social security income and delayed VA/SSA income matches are resulting in proposals to reduce or stop Improved Pension benefits and significant debts.

Here's some background: VA's Improved Pension program payment amount is the difference between countable income and a limit set by Congress – Maximum Annual Pension Rate or MAPR. The computer matching agreement between Social Security and VA used to adjust VA income-based benefits has recently been enhanced and developed. It has resulted in the Pension Management Center receiving batches of income matches that would need to be adjusted retroactively.

How can we help: Here are several strategies to support Veterans:

- The Veteran or claimant is responsible for informing VA of changes in income. You should counsel clients on the need to report any changes in income when assisting them in applying for Improved Pension.
- Review whether there are unreimbursed medical expenses to reduce the amount of debt.
- Provide counsel and assist in seeking debt relief options available from VA's Debt Management Center.

Additional resources:

- [March 2022 Lunch & Learn](#): Preparing Eligibility Verification and Medical Expense Report
- [2023 Spring Regional Training](#): VA Debt Management Center

Support Timely Quality Review and Filing

Help TDVS speed quality review and filing by tagging claim forms and disagreements in Package-A-Claim notes. Simply include the form number – 526, 534, 527, 0996, 0995 or 10182 -- as appropriate as a note.

tylerVetraSpec technologies

PACKAGE A CLAIM Today is: Mar. 07, 2023
Logged in: Ronald Dvorsky JR (rwdvorsky) | Logout

HOME SEARCH ADD RESOURCES DOCUMENTS REPORTS FORMS CALENDAR MY TASKS GENERAL CONTACT LOG

QUICK OVERVIEW MORE DETAILS MILITARY SERVICE CURRENT RATINGS PENDING ISSUES FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS DEPENDENTS COMMUNICATION RECORDS FINANCIALS PACKAGE A CLAIM MY VETS DIRECT SUBMIT

NAME: Mouse, Mickey VETASPEC ID: 86403 SSN: 789-56-1234 DOB: Nov. 18, 1928 VA CLAIM #: POA: Tennessee Department of Veterans Services

PACKAGE A NEW CLAIM

This form allows you to prepare a claim and send it electronically to the State Department Claims Office. Select the forms and documents you wish to attach, enter any information you'd like to communicate to the State Department and click Send. When you have finished, you may check the History below or the [Claims Status](#) page to see the status of the claim.

FORMS TO ATTACH	DOCUMENTS TO ATTACH	NOTES
<input type="checkbox"/> 210779_022017	02-13-20 10:10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11459 CodeSheet <input type="checkbox"/> 11459 Narrative	<p>B I U ABC [Icons]</p> <p>526, 534, 527, 0996, 0995, 10182, 21-22 (POA) or 0966 (ITF)</p> <p>Path: p</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> 210845_092016	05-29-20 03:05 <input type="checkbox"/> 690 CodeSheet <input type="checkbox"/> 690 DBQ Audio Hearing and Tinnitus Exam	
<input type="checkbox"/> 210966	04-01-20 04:14 <input type="checkbox"/> 690 Narrative	
<input type="checkbox"/> 210966	05-29-20 03:26 <input type="checkbox"/> DD214 <input type="checkbox"/> DD214	
<input type="checkbox"/> 210966	05-18-22 03:32 <input type="checkbox"/> Mickey mouse signature email 05292020	
<input type="checkbox"/> 210966	06-30-22 12:58 <input type="checkbox"/> Mouse cemetery DOC 052920 <input type="checkbox"/> TESTD	

Advocate Spotlight

Please join us in welcoming Tennessee's newest accredited representatives:

Joe Allen, Marion
 Johnnie Collins, Sumner
 James Dignan, Cumberland
 Thomas Jacobs, Putnam
 Laterrica Jones, Madison
 Aaron Jowers, Henderson
 Sandy Moss, McMinn
 Michael Parks, Cannon
 Shane Prater, Campbell
 William Woodall, Sullivan

Congratulations on your recent completion of TDVS's Accreditation Course and TDVS accreditation!

If you have an example of teamwork between Veteran service offices/organizations across the state making a difference in the lives of Tennessee veterans, please share with your Regional Director for possible inclusion in an upcoming "Advocate Spotlight."

TDVS Benefits Bulletins Can Be Found on the [VSO Tools](#) Portion of TDVS's Website

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