

TDVS Benefits Bulletin 24-10

TDVS Updates
VA and Veteran Benefit Updates
Practice Like a Pro
Advocate Spotlight

This month's bulletin is 1,401 words and will take just under 6 minutes of your time.

1 big thing: 2024 Veterans Day Governor's Ceremony



TDVS Updates

Ribbon Cutting - New TDVS Memphis Field Office Location





TDVS' Knowledge Library

- Added 2025 Training Calendar for VSOs VSO Tools Job Aids
- Added <u>Benefits Intake Delays: A Message From the VA 09_2024</u> VetraSpec 24-1 Update Resource Page – Notes/Guides
- Added <u>REMINDER: The VA has replaced D2D with Benefits Claims API</u> VSO Tools TDVS Benefits Bulletin 2024 VetraSpec 24-1 Update Resource Page Notes/Guides

Training Updates

What's next: Here's the training schedule for the remainder of the calendar year:

- October Initial Accreditation Training, Monday, October 21, 2024 Friday, October 25, 2024
- Annual Examination Friday, November 15th **OR** Monday, November 18th Virtual
- December Lunch & Learn Wednesday, December 11, 2024 Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at Centerstone Clarksville



- 2024 Training Schedule
- 2025 Training Schedule

VA and Veteran Benefit Updates

<u>Proposed Rule – Updating VA Adjudication Regulations for Disability or Death Benefits</u>
<u>Claims Based on Toxic Exposure</u>

VA has published a <u>proposed rule</u> in the Federal Register to amend its adjudication regulations to implement provisions of the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022 (PACT Act).

Why it matters: These proposed amendments are needed to the PACT Act and will allow VA to expand disability compensation benefits for Veterans who were exposed to toxic substances during military service.

Here's more:

- Proposed Rule
- Federal Register
- Plain Language Summary Document

Don't forget: TDVS's <u>Honoring Our PACT Act Toolbox</u> is your one stop shop for all things PACT Act.

<u>Final Rule – Expanded Burial Benefits</u>

VA has published a <u>final rule</u> in the Federal Register to amend its regulations pertaining to burial benefits to conform to statutory changes enacted by the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 and the Burial Equity for Guards and Reserves Act of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022.

Why it matters: These changes implement an expansion of the transportation benefit and provision of a single payment rate for non-service-connected burial allowances regardless of the location of a qualifying Veteran's death.

Here's more:

- <u>Final Rule</u>
- Federal Register
- <u>Veterans Burial Allowance & Transportation Benefits</u>



<u>Final Rule – Reconsideration of Prior Interment and Memorialization Decisions</u>

VA has published a <u>final rule</u> in the Federal Register to implement the statute authorizing VA to reconsider a prior decision to inter or honor the memory of a person in a VA national cemetery.

Why it matters: This rulemaking implements review criteria and procedures for reconsideration of prior interment or memorialization decisions for decedents who are subsequently found to have committed or to have been convicted of certain criminal acts that would prohibit them from receiving benefits to which they are otherwise entitled.

Here's more:

- <u>Final Rule</u>
- <u>Federal Register</u>
- Code of Federal Regulations

Reporting a Veteran's Death, Survivor Benefits, and Posthumous Scams

VA is spreading awareness to families of deceased Veterans on reporting a Veteran's death, available benefits for survivors, and protecting against posthumous scams. Family members should report the death of a Veteran as soon as possible to stop current benefits.

• **To report the death of a Veteran -** Calling is the fastest way to report the death of a Veteran so VA will stop benefit payments - **Call VA** 800-827-1000 (TTY: 711) and select 5. Agents are available Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. ET.

Best practices to avoid posthumous scams are (for the Survivor):

- Save important files such as the Veteran's military service/treatment records, discharge papers, and copies of their VA claims.
- Go to <u>VA.gov</u> For guidance on creating an account and obtaining a VA security PIN to securely access benefit information. <u>A VA Security PIN is an additional way to secure</u> <u>direct deposit accounts from theft and protect Personally Identifiable Information (PII).</u>
- Never give out PII via text and be cautious of suspicious hyperlinks or unfamiliar hyperlinks.
- If a survivor is missing a VA benefits payment, identifies a discrepancy in payments, or find suspicious activity with their direct deposit account, contact VA immediately at 800-827-1000.



• Review all documents thoroughly. Survivors should never sign a blank form for someone else to complete later. They should always review the completed form before signing and retain a copy of the completed form for their records.

For protection against identity theft scams, <u>notify the major credit bureaus</u> (Equifax, Experian and TransUnion) and notify the Veteran's financial institutions so all accounts can be closed or transferred appropriately.

- According to AARP, scammers also use names published in obituaries to pretend to be long lost relatives of the deceased. When it's time to write your loved one's obituary, leave out the birthdate, middle name, home address, birthplace, and mother's maiden name.
- To report a missing VA benefits payment, please call the VBA National Call Center at 800-827-1000.
- You may also file a complaint with the <u>Federal Trade Commission</u> if funeral homes charge to set up funeral honors or schedule a burial with VA's National Cemetery Administration by visiting <u>reportfraud.ftc.gov</u>.
- For other scams predators use, visit <u>www.VA.GOV/VSAFE</u>.

Practice Like a Pro

Digits to Digits (D2D) Sunset

Don't forget: Tyler will be removing D2D as an option in VetraSpec as of October 31, 2024. If you are currently using D2D, be sure to switch to Benefits Claims on the "Package This Claim" screen as soon as possible.

If you haven't already, begin filing POA and ITF with Benefits Claims as soon as possible. This SOP should provide everything you need to get started - <u>Benefits Claims - How to Use 08.10.2024</u>.

I need more: Here's your one-stop shop for all things VetraSpec Release 24-1. Check out -

- Release Notes Detailing Changes and New Features
- VA's Official communication Regarding the Move from D2D to Benefits Claims
- User Guide for Benefits Claims Available to Users Who Currently Have D2D Access
- Instructions for Clearing Browser Cache
- <u>Download this PDF</u> to learn more from the VA.

© Contact your Regional Director or the Appeals & Accreditation Division <u>Training Team</u> for Small Group Training.



Benefits Intake Delays

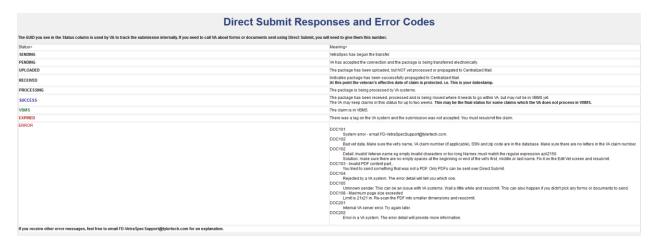
Many of you have noticed and reported that VA is taking longer than normal to process forms and claims, which means you can't see these forms in VBMS.

For the past several months, the VA has been experiencing longer than normal processing times for claims. Claims may remain in "Success" status for several weeks. Click here for more information.

Why it matters: Although a successful filing message preserves an effective date, until a form or document is in VBMS a Veteran can't get accurate information from VA.gov or VA call centers regarding the status of a claim or appeal.

Tips and Tricks:

- A filing with the status of "Success" was successfully submitted to the VA and is going through the VA workflow.
- TDVS continues to adhere to the "Golden 24" filing forms and documents you package within 24 hours.
 - o BUT these forms and documents aren't appearing in VBMS for two weeks or longer.
- TDVS ensures VetraSpec's Direct Submit screen includes a <u>successful filing message</u> and preserves the earliest possible effective date.



- o Do not repackage or refile forms or documents if there is a valid success message.
- Please wait at least 14 21 days to engage TDVS to check the status of a filing that has not appeared in VBMS.

I need more:



• Correspondence from VetraSpec – <u>Benefits Intake Delays</u> – Includes Tips to Avoid Delays

Advocate Spotlight

2024 Annual Conference – That's a Wrap!

Thank you Tennessee Veteran Advocates for making TDVS's 2024 Annual Training Conference, Awards Banquet and Advocacy Summit a success.



Congratulations to all the State and County Advocates that were recognized at TDVS's 2024 Awards Banquet. Follow TDVS on social media to see pictures of the awardees -

Facebook | X | LinkedIn

Check out the TDVS 2024 Advocacy Summit webpage. Even if you were not able to attend this year's summit, you can find valuable resources to support your advocacy -

Presenter Slides



- Resources to Support Your Community
- Advocacy Best Practices
- And More

Save the date – September 29 – October 1, 2025 – and look forward to seeing you in Knoxville for TDVS's 2025 Annual Training Conference and Awards Banquet.

Do you have an advocacy success story or something you'd like to see included in an upcoming bulletin? If so, <u>share</u> for a future bulletin.

TDVS Benefits Bulletins Can Be Found on the <u>VSO Tools</u> Portion of TDVS's Website

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