

TDVS Benefits Bulletin
20-1

[TDVS Updates](#)
[VA and Veteran Benefit Updates](#)
[Quality Review Insights](#)
[Practice Like a Pro](#)

TDVS Updates

Appeals Division Updates

If you need immediate assistance or support from the Appeals Division, you can utilize tdva.vbanas@va.gov in addition to team members' personal emails and phone numbers. This email address is constantly monitored by both the Local and Board Teams and you won't have to worry about the employee you are trying to reach being out of the office if you have an urgent need. You can find an updated Appeals Division team roster with contact information and major responsibilities [here](#).

VetraSpec and Open Database

VetraSpec users now have access to all veterans in Tennessee's VetraSpec database. **REMINDER...Please remember to change the Office and CVSO information** to reflect the office (Region/Office/County) and individual (CSO) assisting the client in order to improve the accuracy of VetraSpec's report functions.

OFFICE AND CVSO INFORMATION	
REGION/OFFICE/COUNTY:	<input type="text" value="Nashville Field Office"/>
CSO:	<input type="text" value="Travis Murphy - TDVS"/>
CLAIM MANAGED BY:	<input type="text" value="Travis Murphy - TDVS"/>
RECORD LAST EDITED BY:	Travis Murphy (TDVS) on Dec. 02, 2019
RECORD ORIGINALLY ENTERED BY:	Travis Murphy (TDVS), on Jun. 27, 2019
IS THIS RECORD CONFIDENTIAL?	<input type="text" value="No"/>
<input type="button" value="Save"/>	

VetraSpec by DataSpec, Inc. | www.dataspecinc.com | 1-877-568-7732 | [Help](#)
Use constitutes agreement of the TOS

VA and Veteran Benefit Updates

Blue Water

The Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019 took effect on January 1, 2020 and VA has begun adjudicating claims and appeals for Blue Water veterans. VA has developed a

communications toolkit with resources that can be viewed and shared. These resources may be accessed from the [BWN informational website](#).

TDVS is reviewing a recent VA Office of General Counsel [precedential opinion](#) and M21-1 guidance concerning the effective date provisions of the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019 and will provide additional information in a separate fact sheet.

Expanded Access to Commissaries and Exchanges

Beginning January 1, 2020 all service-connected veterans, Purple Heart recipients, former prisoners of war, and individuals approved and designated as the primary family caregiver of eligible veterans under VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PFAFC) are eligible to access commissaries, military service exchanges and MWR services. DoD has provided a series of [common questions and answers](#) for how newly eligible veterans and family members can access these facilities and services.

Quality Review Insights

Digital Filing

The Digits to Digits (D2D) program remains the Appeals Division's preferred method to file eligible forms, which include the VA Form 21-22, VA Form 21-0966 and VA Form 21-526EZ. Here are some tips to help ensure the forms you generate are D2D eligible.

- **Treatment Dates in the Future.** If a veteran is continuing to receive treatment at a VA medical center, use the date you complete the 526EZ as the end treatment date in block 17 of the 526EZ. Treatment dates in the future or leaving the blocks empty prevents successful D2D filing. A correct example is below:

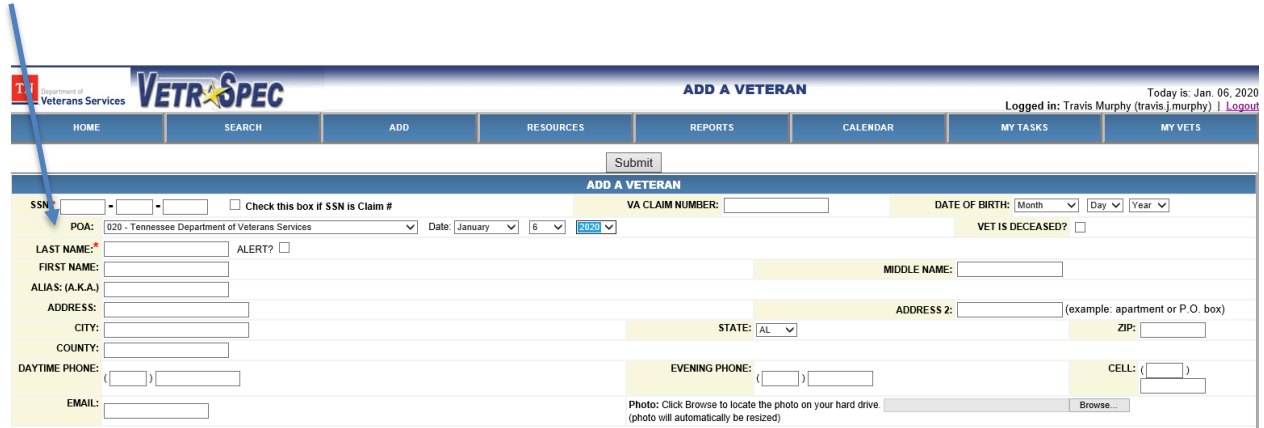
17. LIST VA MEDICAL CENTER(S) (VAMC) AND DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD) MILITARY TREATMENT FACILITIES (MTF) WHERE YOU RECEIVED TREATMENT AFTER DISCHARGE FOR YOUR CLAIMED DISABILITY(IES) LISTED IN ITEM 16 AND PROVIDE TREATMENT DATES:	
A. ENTER THE DISABILITY TREATED AND NAME/LOCATION OF THE TREATMENT FACILITY <i>If a treatment facility is listed here, you must enter complete treatment dates in B.</i>	B. DATE(S) OF TREATMENT
Alvin C. York VAMC	January 1 2017 TO December 31 2018
Memphis VAMC	January 1 2019 TO January 3 2020
	Month Day Year TO Month Day Year
	Month Day Year TO Month Day Year

- **Service Numbers.** The veteran service number field only accepts numeric characters ie. 1, 2, 3, etc. Do not include letters when populating a service number either in the "Military Service" tab of VetraSpec or when completing forms. These prevent successful digital filing using D2D.

Additional digital filing tips can be found here -- [Digits to Digits and Digital Filing Fact Sheet](#)

Power of Attorney

Please remember that you need to edit the “More Details” screen in VetraSpec in order to assign or update power of attorney (POA). The VA Form 21-22 in VetraSpec auto-populates with the POA that is established in that field.



The screenshot shows the 'ADD A VETERAN' form in VETASPEC. A blue arrow points to the POA dropdown menu, which is currently set to '020 - Tennessee Department of Veterans Services'. Other fields include SSN, VA CLAIM NUMBER, DATE OF BIRTH, LAST NAME, FIRST NAME, ALIAS, ADDRESS, CITY, COUNTY, DAYTIME PHONE, EVENING PHONE, CELL, and EMAIL. There is also a 'VET IS DECEASED?' checkbox and a 'Photo' upload field.

The Appeals Division continues to encounter instances where claims or related materials have been packaged using VetraSpec when the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) is the Power of Attorney of record. DAV is not an organization supported by TDVS. They have their own office and framework for claim submission in the State of Tennessee. If a county service officer is accredited with DAV and desires to utilize that POA, they should provide that assistance outside of VetraSpec and work through the DAV team at the VA Regional Office.

Reviewing VA systems prior to assisting a veteran will ensure that you hold the appropriate accreditation necessary to represent a veteran or other claimant before VA. The VSO hotline -- 855-225-0709 -- is another resource that may be used to determine whether a POA is of record when providing claims assistance.

Practice Like a Pro

Accessing VA Systems (VBMS; SHARE) Through Desktop

You can now access VA Systems such as VBMS and SHARE through a desktop application available via citrix. This method of accessing VA systems provides a quicker connection and reduces the timing out that frequently occurs when accessing through the RO5VBAAPPS folder. Instructions for navigating to VBMS and SHARE using the desktop are available [here](#).

VSO Hotline

VA has a dedicated VSO hotline -- 855-225-0709 -- that can assist service officers in answering common questions or addressing common issues. This number is dedicated to service officers who are assisting veterans or family members and should not be used by individual claimants seeking VA assistance.

For example:

- Change of Address – The VSO hotline can be used to quickly update a veteran or claimant’s mailing address for purposes of compensation benefits.
- Dependency Claims – The VSO hotline can initiate a simple dependency claim over the phone.
- Direct Deposit – The VSO hotline can quickly update a veteran or claimant’s direct deposit information.
- Status of Claim – During quality review, the Appeals Division has seen VA Forms 21-4138 with statements such as “I would like the status of my pension.” Or “Would like status update on my claim (Appeal) please?” The VSO line, or in the alternative VBMS or TDVS’s Appeals Division, would allow you to provide a better update than any response you might receive from filing a 4138 regarding the status of a claim or appeal.
- Notice of Death – The VSO hotline can be utilized to report a veteran or claimant’s death to VA and to collect information, such as whether the veteran had service-connected conditions or VA life insurance, necessary to assist surviving family members with survivor benefits.

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