

TDVS Benefits Bulletin
20-4

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TDVS Updates

Training Opportunity – TDVS Accreditation Training

Because of COVID-19 and the state and county stay at home policies associated with it, TDVS have decided to postpone the April 27 – May 1, 2020 accreditation class to June 1st to June 5th, 2020, location to be determined. We have moved it approximately 30 days to the right hoping there will be flattening of the curve that will ease local policies. TDVS leadership will reassess the conditions on or about May 1, 2020 and will provide further updates when that time comes. Thank you for your patience in this matter. TDVS's goal is to ensure class participants and staff are protected from this virus.

VA and Veteran Benefit Updates

Exception to Date of Receipt Rule

On Monday, April 20, 2020, VA published notice in the [Federal Register](#) regarding an exception to the general date of receipt rule for claims and related filings.

Generally, date of receipt of claims or evidence is the day it was received in a VA Regional Office. Beginning March 1, 2020 and ending 60 days after the date the President ends the national state of emergency, correspondence received from any claimant that contains claims, information or evidence will be considered received on the date of postmark. If there is no mail postmark from the United State Postal Service, VA will consider the correspondence as received no later than February 29, 2020. This guidance applies to all correspondence received during the designated period from all domestic ZIP codes and foreign mail codes.

It is anticipated this change will have little to no impact on TDVS as nearly all claim and related filings are filed using electronic means.

Economic Impact Payments



The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act includes a \$1,200 stimulus check for eligible taxpayers whose income falls below the eligibility threshold.

Certain individuals that receive non-taxable benefits, such as VA disability compensation or survivor benefits may not be required to file a Federal tax return. VA has worked with the Treasury Department to [automatically issue payments](#) to eligible veterans or survivors who receive non-taxable VA benefits and did not file tax returns in 2018 or 2019. If eligible veterans or survivors have a dependent, they must take an additional step to enter information on the [IRS website](#) about their qualifying children to ensure they receive the \$500 per dependent child payment in additional to their individual payment.

Additional information on Economic Impact Payments can be found by visiting the IRS's website -- <https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus/economic-impact-payments>

VA Pension and Economic Impact Payments

Economic Impact Payments will not be counted as income for purposes of VA's pension programs. VA provided written guidance in an April 15, 2020 update to its [Adjudication Procedures Manual](#), M21-1 V.iii.1.l.3.y.

Quality Review Insights

Power of Attorney

Veterans Resource Coordinators (VRC) and County Veteran Service Officers (CSO) should be reviewing VA systems to determine whether a Power of Attorney (POA) is of record when providing claims assistance.

The Appeals Division has received packages with a 21-22 when the same organization listed on the 21-22 was already appointed as representative. Further, in conducting quality review the Appeals Division has found that VetraSpec has not always been updated to reflect the current POA of record in VA systems. Not every claim requires submission of a new VA Form 21-22 (Power of Attorney). The bottom line is if you're able to see documents in VBMS then there is a valid POA in place.

Utilizing VA systems will also ensure that you hold the appropriate accreditation necessary to represent a veteran or other claimant before VA. Please remember that a valid power of attorney, executed on a VA Form 21-22, is required to represent a claimant before VA.

Veterans with an eBenefits account can request representation using this online tool. Here's a [step-by-step guide](#) that you and clients can use to establish representation using



eBenefits. TDVS employees monitor these requests daily in order to establish representation.

Claims for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

The Appeals Division continues to encounter claims for PTSD that do not include the required stressor form (VA Form 21-0781). Failure to include the stressor, *except if the evidence submitted with the FDC is sufficient for VA to concede a stressor such as a combat decoration*, removes the PTSD claim from the Fully Developed Claims process and increases the length of time a veteran waits for a decision because VA then has to send the VA Form 21-0781 to the veteran and request completion. Submission of a stressor statement, even when evidence submitted may be sufficient for VA to concede a stressor, is still a best practice to avoid any possibility that a claim be excluded from FDC.

If necessary, use an intent to file (21-0966) to preserve date of claim and allow the veteran the time, and privacy if desired, to complete the stressor form and then file with the 526EZ as an FDC. If a stressor statement will not accompany the initial claim for PTSD, please include a short communication in VetraSpec to that effect in order to expedite Appeals Division review.

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.

- **Military Service Information.** Section V of the 21-526EZ requires information about a veteran's military service. Much of the information in blocks 18A. to 23B. is required in order to successfully file using D2D. Some digital filing tips related to military service include:
 - VetraSpec has annotated blocks 20C through 23B in red text in order to assist users in properly completing military service information.
 - The National Guard and Reserve addresses are limited to 20 characters.
 - Military Service information can be entered in the "Military Service" tab of VetraSpec in order to auto-populate 21-526Ezs. Select the "Military Service" button from VetraSpec's menu and either "Add New" or "Edit this Record" to add or edit a veteran's military service information.

VETRA*SPEC **MILITARY SERVICE DETAIL** Today is: Feb. 04, 2020
 Logged in: Travis Murphy (travis.j.murphy) | [Logout](#)

HOME	SEARCH	ADD	RESOURCES	DOCUMENTS	REPORTS	FORMS	CALENDAR	MY TASKS					
QUICK OVERVIEW	MORE DETAILS	MILITARY SERVICE	CURRENT RATINGS	PENDING ISSUES	FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE	PAYMENTS	DEPENDENTS	COMMUNICATION	RECORDS	FINANCIALS	PACKAGE A CLAIM	MY VETS	DIRECT SUBMIT

MILITARY SERVICE DETAILS
 TOTAL PERIODS OF SERVICE: 1

[EDIT THIS RECORD](#) [ADD A NEW RECORD](#) [Delete](#)

SERVICE DETAILS

- **Required Fields Must be Completed.** VetraSpec has annotated D2D eligible forms with red text to highlight required fields, special character rules, and provide other tips. An example is below.
 - Most fields do not allow special characters. Use *only* letters and numbers in fields, unless VetraSpec’s red text indicates otherwise. If a special character is needed, replace it with the word that describes the character. IE, write the word “percent” instead of using %. Do not use apostrophes.
 - All dates must be complete. IE, MM-DD-YYYY. Partial dates are not accepted in *any* field, including the treatment dates and military service fields on the 21-526EZ.
 - Block 17B must be complete for successful D2D filing even though Block 17 of the current version of the 21-526EZ includes an option to check if you do not have treatment dates.
 - “Yes/No” (checkboxes) on the forms must be answered either Yes or No.
 - Direct deposit information is no longer required on the 526EZ if already established with VA.

18A. DID YOU SERVE UNDER ANOTHER NAME? <input type="checkbox"/> YES (If "Yes," complete Item 18B) <input type="checkbox"/> NO (If "No," skip to Item 19A)		18B. PLEASE LIST THE OTHER NAME(S) YOU SERVED UNDER <input type="text"/>	
19A. BRANCH OF SERVICE (Check all that apply) You must check one. <input type="checkbox"/> ARMY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NAVY <input type="checkbox"/> MARINE CORPS <input type="checkbox"/> AIR FORCE <input type="checkbox"/> COAST GUARD		19B. COMPONENT (Check all that apply) You must check one. <input type="checkbox"/> ACTIVE <input type="checkbox"/> RESERVES <input type="checkbox"/> NATIONAL GUARD	
20A. MOST RECENT ACTIVE SERVICE DATES (MM,DD,YYYY) Required. Month Day Year ENTRY DATE: September 4 1991 EXIT DATE: September 4 1994		20B. PLACE OF LAST OR ANTICIPATED SEPARATION Required. <input type="text"/> Norfolk VA	
20C. DID YOU SERVE IN A COMBAT ZONE SINCE 9-11-2001? You must check one. <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO		20D. ADDITIONAL PERIODS OF SERVICE (Indicate enlistment and discharge dates, if applicable) VETRASPEC INSTRUCTIONS: If you have more than one additional period of service, please use a 4138 to list them. Enlistment Date(s) Discharge Date(s) Month Day Year Month Day Year	
21A. ARE YOU CURRENTLY SERVING OR HAVE YOU EVER SERVED IN THE RESERVES OR NATIONAL GUARD? You must check one. <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO (If "Yes," complete Items 21B thru 21F) (If "No," skip to Item 22A)		21B. COMPONENT <input type="checkbox"/> NATIONAL GUARD <input type="checkbox"/> RESERVES	21C. OBLIGATION TERM OF SERVICE Month Day Year From: Month Day Year Month Day Year To: Month Day Year
21D. CURRENT OR LAST ASSIGNED NAME AND ADDRESS OF UNIT: Unit Name <input type="text"/> Address Name State Address <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> City State ZIP		21E. CURRENT OR ASSIGNED PHONE NUMBER OF UNIT (Include Area Code) <input type="text"/>	21F. ARE YOU CURRENTLY RECEIVING INACTIVE DUTY TRAINING PAY? You must check one. <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
22A. ARE YOU CURRENTLY ACTIVATED ON FEDERAL ORDERS WITHIN THE NATIONAL GUARD OR RESERVES? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO (If "Yes," complete Items 22B & 22C)		22B. DATE OF ACTIVATION: (MM,DD,YYYY) Month Day Year <input type="text"/>	22C. ANTICIPATED SEPARATION DATE: (MM,DD,YYYY) Month Day Year <input type="text"/>
23A. HAVE YOU EVER BEEN A PRISONER OF WAR? <input type="checkbox"/> YES (If "Yes," complete Item 23B) <input type="checkbox"/> NO		23B. DATES OF CONFINEMENT (MM,DD,YYYY) From: To: Month Day Year Month Day Year <input type="text"/>	

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

Practice Like a Pro

COVID-19 and Remote Claims Assistance

Updates related to COVID-19 and tips on providing remote claims assistance can be found in the [special TDVS Benefit Bulletin](#). TDVS has provided three updates during the evolution of the Novel Coronavirus outbreak.

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