

## **Filing a Disability Claim with the DAV**

**DAV Claims Office**

**Castle Point VA Medical Center**

**41 Castle Point Rd**

**Wappinger Falls NY**

**Building 17 Room 108**

**(845) 831-2000 Ext. 215713 Or 215714**

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **1. What documents (or evidence) will I need to support my claim?**

When you file a VA disability claim, you will need to submit, or give us permission to gather evidence to support that your claimed condition is associated with an in-service event or injury or that shows your rated disability has gotten worse.

Evidence could include:

- VA medical and/or hospital records that relate to your claimed condition or that show your rated disability has gotten worse.
- Private medical and/or hospital records that relate to your claimed condition or that show your rated disability has gotten worse.

- Supporting statements from family, friends, coworkers, clergy, or law enforcement personnel with knowledge about how and when your disability happened or how it got worse.

You should also submit your DD214 or other separation documents. As needed, VA will assist with obtaining relevant records, which includes verification of your service.

## **2. Should I submit an intent to file form?**

If you plan to file your claim but do not have all your evidence ready to submit with your claim, you may first want to submit an intent to file. This form serves as a place holder, giving you time to gather evidence while holding a potential start date (also called an effective date). Your effective date is the day VA determines your service-connected benefits begin. The assigned effective date impacts the amount of retroactive compensation you may receive. When VA receives your intent to file, you may be able to get a retroactive payment (compensation that starts at a point in the past) back to that date. You have one year from the date you send in your intent to file to submit your claim. If a claim is not received within one year, the intent to file expires.

## **3. What type of disability claim should I file?**

Depending on your situation, you could file the following disability claims:

- In-service disability claims - This applies if you got sick or injured while serving in the military and have a current condition associated with your in-service illness or injury.
- Aggravated disability claims - This applies if you had an illness or injury before you joined the military and serving made it worse

. • Post-service and presumptive disability claims – This applies if you have a disability related to your active-duty service that didn't appear until after you ended your service.

• Increased claims – This applies if you are already service-connected for a disability, and it has gotten worse.

• Secondary service-connected claims – This applies if you have a disability that is related to a condition that is already service-connected.

#### **4. How long does it take VA to make a decision?**

Up-to-date information about the average days it takes to complete a disability-related claim may be found on VA.gov. While waiting for a decision, you do not need to do anything, unless VA sends you a letter asking for more information. If VA schedules an exam(s) for you, it's important not to miss your scheduled exam. If you do not show up to your appointment, it may also delay your claim, or your claim may be decided based on the evidence you provided. VA will use several third-party vendors, such as Optum, VES and QTC, to assist with expediting your exam.

#### **5. Can I check my claims or appeal status online?**

Yes. You can check the status of a claim or appeal anytime online at [www.va.gov/claim-or-appeal-status/](http://www.va.gov/claim-or-appeal-status/). If you do not have access to the internet, you may contact VA at 800-827-1000, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. EST

**6. How does VA assign disability ratings?** A disability rating percentage is assigned based on the severity of your service-connected condition. The disability rating percentage determines

how much disability compensation you may receive each month. It also impacts your eligibility for other VA benefits. If VA grants more than one condition, you will have multiple disability rating percentages. VA then uses the individually assigned rated percentages to calculate your combined VA disability rating. Calculating your combined disability rating involves more than adding up the individual rating percentages. Your combined rating percentage may be different from the sum of your individual rating percentages. To learn more about disability ratings or to calculate your combined disability rating, visit [www.va.gov/disability/about-disability-ratings/](http://www.va.gov/disability/about-disability-ratings/).

**7. Will I need to report to a VA claims exam?** After you file your disability benefits claim, VA may ask you to report to an exam, commonly known as a compensation and pension, or C&P exam. This exam helps evaluate your disability, as an assigned rating percentage is based on the severity of your condition. This affects how much disability compensation you may receive. An exam is not required with every claim. In general, an exam is requested when additional medical evidence is needed to substantiate the claim. If an exam is needed, the staff at your local VA medical center, or a local doctor's office that VA partners with, will contact you. They will either send you a letter by mail with the date and time of your exam or call you to negotiate a time that works for you. To aid in this step of the claims process, you should make sure both the VA regional office and the VA medical center nearest you have your up-to-date address, phone number and email address so you get your exam notice in time.

**8. Does everyone who files a claim need a VA claim exam?** No. VA will only ask you to attend a claim exam if more information is needed to decide your claim. If there is enough medical evidence in

your file to support your claim, you may not need to report to an exam. Medical evidence may include treatment records from a VA medical center, doctor or hospital reports, test results and other documents.