

OVERVIEW OF SYSTEMATIC TECHNICAL ACCURACY REVIEW (STAR) LESSON PLAN

PREREQUISITE TRAINING

Prior to this training, the trainees must have completed training in all identified topics from the Challenge Pre-Requisite Schedule that applies to their specific level of experience.

OBJECTIVES

Given access to the Overview of Systematic Technical Accuracy Review (STAR) Trainee Handout, and the appropriate regulatory and manual references, you will be able to:

PP #2& 3
TH #1

- Identify correctly the End Products which associates with the issue or award action
- Recognize the three areas of work the STAR systems considers
- Comprehend accurately the three categories of the STAR accuracy review results
- Be familiar with the STAR Rating and Authorization Review Checklist as it relates to measuring technical accuracy as either “accurate” or “in error.”

TIME REQUIRED

30 min, lecture; 15 min of review of Local STAR errors, for *Training Purposes Only* with 15 min for practical exercise.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD

Participatory discussion demonstration of retrieving STAR Reports Narrative data from [STAR Home Page](#) and a practical exercise. Utilization of the training aids listed below are recommended to enhance the training process.

REFERENCES

PP #4

TH #3

[M21-4, Manpower Control and Utilization in Adjudication](#)

- [Chapter 2](#). Workflow Management
- [Chapter 3](#). Quality Assurance
- [Chapter 5](#). Systematic Analyses of Operations (SAO)

- [Appendix C](#). End Product Classification Codes and Work Rate Standards for Quantitative Measurement

[STAR Home Page](#)

[COVERS Online User Guide](#)

**MATERIALS/
TRAINING AIDS**

- Classroom or private area where a discussion may be held. Chairs and writing surfaces are required.
- Computer for the instructor with appropriate projection equipment and software, with access to:
- Large writing surface such as easel pad, chalkboard, dry erase board with appropriate markers.
- Claim Folders, which have a completed STAR Checklist, if available. These cases should be utilized for **TRAINING PURPOSES ONLY** and should be “redacted” if applicable, to provide anonymity of the individual(s) who may have worked the claim.
- Current National STAR Error Narrative Report, retrieved from the STAR website.
- Overview of Systematic Technical Accuracy Review (STAR) Trainee Handouts
- Overview of Systematic Technical Accuracy Review (STAR) PowerPoint Presentation

**INSTRUCTOR
PREPARATION**

To effectively teach this lesson, instructors should not only be knowledgeable with station technical quality, but should be familiar with utilizing STAR Quality Review Check Sheets and know where to locate the National STAR errors.

INTRODUCTION

Introduce yourself and inform participants of the lesson topic.

MOTIVATION

“...The number of veterans awaiting decisions could grow as service members returning from ongoing conflicts and aging veterans submit claims. According to VA, about 35 percent of veterans from ongoing hostilities file claims. It is important not only that decisions be timely, but also accurate. Accurate initial claims decisions can help ensure that VA is paying cash disability benefits to those entitled to such benefits and also help prevent lengthy appeals. “...Excerpts of a statement by *Daniel Bertoni, Director, Education, Workforce, and Income Security Issues*
U.S. Government Accountability Office 3/24/2010

TEACHING POINTS

Ensure the trainee understands the impact of STAR as it relates to measurement of the compensation and pension claims processing accuracy.

Purpose of STAR

What is STAR? STAR (Systematic Technical Accuracy Review) is VBA's national program for measuring compensation and pension claims processing accuracy.

TH #4
PP#5

The STAR system includes review of work in (3) **three areas**, but is not limited to:

PP#6

1. Claims that usually require a rating decision,
2. Claims that generally do not require a rating decision, and
3. Fiduciary work.

STAR accuracy review results are generated for all 57 VBA regional offices and are included in both the station and RO Director's annual performance measures.

Each month, members of the STAR staff request the following cases for quality review:

- Rating cases from 56 regional offices (WRO excluded) and 3 Pension Management Centers;
- Authorization cases from 57 regional offices and 3 pension management centers;
- Rating cases from 13 Day-One Brokering Centers and the Tiger Team;
- Rating cases processed by the Appeals Management Center (AMC);
- Rating cases worked under the Disability Evaluation System (DES) pilot program at Baltimore and Seattle.
- In addition, special focus case reviews are conducted as needed to support agency needs. Examination quality reviews are also conducted in collaboration with the Compensation and Pension Examination Program (CPEP).

How are the stations notified of which files to send?

What is the Purpose of STAR? The purpose of STAR is intended to assist supervisors in monitoring the level of service to those persons served by VSCs.

Stations will be notified by e-mail of the listing and the date by which folder transfer must be accomplished. Stations are responsible for compliance with the notice.

STAR accuracy review results are classified in three categories:

1. Benefit Entitlement
2. Decision Documentation/Notification, and
3. Administrative

The results are generated for all regional offices, included in station annual performance measures, and used to facilitate station-training needs.

PP# 7
TH#5

How many cases are selected? The monthly selection of cases for STAR includes 21 rating and authorization-related EPs, along with 32 rating-related EPs from each of the 13 Day-One Brokering Centers and the Tiger Team.

How are the cases selected?

Cases are selected using systematic random sampling (skip interval method).

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| (1) Small station | 3 reviews per month |
| (2) Medium station | 5 reviews per month |
| (3) Large station | 10 reviews per month |

PP #8
TH #5

Selection Procedures

- End products are available for random selection the month following the month in which the end product was cleared.
- A random list of completed rating and authorization end products is selected from the National Completed Workload File created in Hines.
- The Compensation and Pension Service uses that list to select cases for accuracy review under the STAR program.
- Fiduciary cases are selected from the prior month's completed end products as shown in the Fiduciary-Beneficiary System housed in Philadelphia.

PP #9
TH #6

RECONSIDERATION OF ERROR

Emphasize to the trainees that if the C&P Service withdraws the error, no further action is required. If the error call is upheld, the station must then take corrective action.

PP #10

TH #6

Rating End Products

PP #11

TH#6

Demonstrate to the trainees where to locate the complete list M21-4, Appendix C, *End Product Classification Codes and Work Rate Standards for Quantitative Measurement*

Authorization End Products

PP #12

TH #6

As of March 25, 2010. If your office disagrees with any error call other than a Benefit Entitlement error, your VSCM should send an email to the 214B mailbox, briefly describing the reasons for disagreement. STAR will no longer provide a formal decision on these disagreements. The Chief of the Quality Assurance Staff will provide a response by email or telephone call.

There is no change to the 30-day time limit to submit both formal and informal requests for reconsideration as outlined in M21-4, Chapter 3.07a(3).

The station must take corrective action (re-adjudication, feedback, or training as appropriate); or, the station must request reconsideration of the error call.

These are end products associated with original and reopened claims, claims for increase, and appellate issues. The core rating-related end product review includes the following end products, regardless of the third digit modifier.

EP 010-Original Disability Compensation, Eight or More Issues

EP 020-Reopened Disability Compensation

EP 070-Appeals Processing (Supplemental Statements of the Case and Certification to the Board of Veterans Appeals)

EP 095-Vocational Rehabilitation Eligibility Determinations with Rating

EP 110-Original Disability Compensation, Seven Issues or Less

EP 120-Reopened Disability Pension

EP 140-Original Dependency and Indemnity Compensation

EP 172-Statements of the Case

EP 174-Hearings Conducted by Hearing Officer

EP 180-Original Disability Pension

These are end products that require development, review, and administrative decision or award action. The authorization accuracy review includes all of the following end products, as well as those using a third digit modifier:

EP 130-Dependency Adjustments or Decisions

EP 135-Hospital Adjustments

EP 160-Burial, Plot, Headstone, Marker, and Engraving Claims Decisions

EP 165-Decisions Involving Accrued Benefits

EP 190-Original Death Pension

EP 290-Miscellaneous Eligibility Determinations

EP 600-Due Process

Pension Maintenance Review

STAR results are generated for all 57 VBA regional offices (RO) and are included in both the station and RO Director's annual performance measures. Results are also generated for the three Pension Management Centers (PMCs), 13 Day-One Brokering Centers, and the Tiger Team.

PP #13

TH #6

End products cleared by the PMCs include a seven as the third-digit modifier. The sample includes 10 for each PMC selected randomly from the following end products:

EP 137-Dependency Adjustments or Decisions

EP 155-Eligibility Verification Report (EVR) related adjustments or decisions

EP 157-Income related adjustments or decisions

EP 607-Due Process

**A separate sample for each of the three Pension Maintenance Centers (PMCs), Philadelphia (RO 310), Milwaukee (RO 330), and St. Paul (RO 335) is reviewed.

Where to send cases. All rating, authorization and fiduciary cases should be sent via UPS to:

C&P STAR Staff
3322 West End Avenue
Suite 730
NASHVILLE, TN 37203

DEFICIENCIES

IMPORTANT: The general guideline is to record an error when an action taken violates current regulations or other directives.

Some examples of outcome-related deficiencies include, but are not limited to:

- Errors that result in an overpayment or,

- Underpayment to a claimant and,
- Deficiencies that would result in a remand from the Board of Veterans Appeals if not corrected.

Procedural Deficiencies: These deficiencies are generally recorded as decision documentation/notification and/or administrative comments. A judgment or a difference of opinion reflecting a possible better practice or solution is recorded as a comment rather than an error.

What is a STAR Checklist?

PP #14

The STAR checklist(s) were designed to facilitate consistent structured reviews and an analysis of all the elements of the processing associated with a specific claim or issue.

TH #7

The Rating and Authorization checklists classify errors into three categories:

1. Benefit Entitlement,
2. Decision Documentation/Notification, and
3. Administrative.

Instructions and Guidelines-Rating & Authorization Review

These instructions and guidelines have been developed to promote consistency and uniformity in the review of cases selected for the Systematic Technical Accuracy Review (STAR) program. Use these instructions/guidelines in conjunction with the STAR Checklist - Rating.

Please read and discuss as a group the Authorization Review Instruction and Guidelines. Emphasize the following highlighted points

For the purpose of measuring technical accuracy under the STAR program, a case is considered either "accurate" or "in error." A case will be considered "accurate" when all of the questions for each element indicated on the Benefit Entitlement Section of the STAR Checklist - Rating are answered "YES" or "NA." The elements are: A) Address all Issues, B) Proper Development, C) Grant or Denial, and D) Award actions. A case will be considered "in error" if the answer to any question for any element is "NO."

PP #15

For each case reviewed, a STAR Checklist must be completed and all questions answered. A "YES" response indicates that the activity associated with the question was completed accurately. A "NO" response indicates that the activity associated with the question was "in error." Indicate

TH #9-18

“N/A” if the question is not applicable to the case under review, or if a “NO” response was previously recorded for the only issue subject to review. A narrative summary is required with statutory, regulatory, judicial, or manual references for any “error” or “NO” answer recorded.

Have the trainees locate the “Authorization Quality Review Checklist” and if feasible a “redacted” completed checklist with the matching claim file. Have the trainees as a group discuss some of the elements of the checklist.

The general guideline is that an error will be recorded when an action is taken that violates current regulations or established policies. Examples of outcome-related deficiencies include, but are not limited to, errors that result in an overpayment or underpayment to a claimant and deficiencies that would result in a remand from the Board of Veterans Appeals if not corrected.

Procedural deficiencies are not recorded as benefit entitlement errors. These deficiencies are recorded as decision documentation/notification or administrative comments. A judgment or a difference of opinion reflecting a possible better practice or solution is recorded as a comment rather than an error. If an error is identified with an issue not related to the end product under review, that error is also recorded as a comment.

PP #16

PP #17/ TH #24 Practical Exercise