Field Guide to Searching the Live Manual

Trainee Handout

**Table of Contents**

[Objectives 2](#_Toc445207361)

[Topic 1: Introduction to the Live Manual 2](#_Toc445207362)

[Topic 2: Searches 2](#_Toc445207363)

[Topic 3: Changes 3](#_Toc445207364)

[Practical Exercise 3](#_Toc445207365)

Objectives

* List characteristics of Live Manual.
* Define metadata and Microsoft Internet Explorer functions.
* Locate the suggestion link for the Live Manual.
* Identify effective search strategies.
* Explain how to find a list of changes by date, change date, and audience.
* Demonstrate use of the manual for research.

**References**

All M21-1 references are found in the [Live Manual Website](https://vaww.compensation.pension.km.va.gov/)

Topic 1: Introduction to the Live Manual

The Live Manual officially launched April 15, 2015. The Live Manual portion of the Knowledge Management (KM) portal alone integrates more than 4,500 individual pieces of published guidance and a thorough review of approximately 6,000 pages of existing M21-1 guidance as well as ongoing updates.

Field employees have been asking for all guidance (fast letters (FL), training letters (TL), Veterans Service Center Manager (VSCM) Bulletins, Quality Call notes, etc.) in one searcheable location. Now we have it!

Do we still have to read the manual and keep up with changes? Yes.

Do we now have to look in many different places and just hope that various guidance aligns? No.

Topic 2: Searches

Metadata is data about data. It makes your search term bring up the article you want. Live Manual employees are adding additional metadata all the time to help searches. You can make suggestions! On the KM home page, click on “We want to hear from you…” link. Follow directions from there.

Searches

* If you can’t find something, try using an alternate search term or a Boolean search.
* Boolean searches use quote marks and allow you to request very specific data.
* If you still can’t find it, try checking training materials for that topic and start your search with the references provided.

Helpful hints: you can select a section from the Browse button on KM (such as M21-1, FL, FAQ, etc., then search in the lower/secondary search box in just that area of the KM.

* You could also type a search term in the “Search Knowledge Base” bar next to the “Browse Topics” button, then a “Refine Your Search” menu comes up on the left. You can narrow your search using content type (Policy/Procedures, Rescinded, Training, etc.), or Special Benefit Group, Target Audience, or Process Stage.

Topic 3: Changes

**What changed? When? Who cares?**

* Log in to the Live Manual
* Click Browse Topics
* Click VA Key Changes
* Click on year folder
* Click hyperlink to month or scroll to changes or use search terms
* Change dates listed in left column
* Changes listed newest to oldest
* Target audience listed on right
* Always a good idea to look at change description to see if you need to take a closer read

If you are having an issue accessing the Live Manual, KnowVA can be accessed by any one through [www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov](http://www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov/).

*Note*: *KnowVA is a mirror image of a portion of the internal content and it’s updated concurrently with internal updates. Not everything available internally is accessible via KnowVA, but what is there is identical to the internal content and is updated concurrently with the Live Manual.*

Practical Exercise

**Directions**: Complete the following searches within the Live Manual to answer the questions.

1. What is the title of M21-1, Part IV, Subpart ii, Chapter 2, Section F, Topic 1, Block b (IV.ii.2.F.1.b)?
2. What is the title of I.2.A.1.a?
3. What is one of the first three references to appear when you search “character of discharge”?
4. Does something different result from searching “COD”? If yes, what?
5. Is there a different result when you type “SMC S” vs. SMC S?
6. If you search housebound, does that produce different results than searching SMC S?
7. Veteran with verified Gulf War (GW) service submits a 21-526EZ claiming undiagnosed illness due to GW service. 5103 notice is included on the 21-526EZ. However, no medical records or other evidence is received, so the 5103 notice included with the 21-526EZ is not sufficient 5103 notice for GW claims. Supplemental 5103 notification specific to GW claims is required under M21-1 Part IV.ii.1.E.1.b.  The specific GW paragraphs provides specific information about GW claims and what evidence is needed to substantiate a GW claim. It is important to use the Gulf War special issue paragraphs in the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) to request what?

What must be attached to this letter?

If there was sufficient medical evidence to grant included with the submission of the 526EZ, would additional 5103 notice be required per III.i.3.B.3.d, “**Important**: Do not send the development letter if the evidence of record provides the information the letter solicits, or if the evidence of record is otherwise sufficient to decide the claim”?

1. What is the M21-1 citation for the content titled, “Date Disabilities Became Subject to Presumptive SC under 38 CFR 3.309(e)”?

What did you search to find it?

1. What is the exception for excluding a Veteran from the FDC program for failing to report for a VA examination and asking to be rescheduled?

What is the M21-1 citation for this?

What did you search to find it?