Introduction to Workload Management

Instructor Lesson Plan

Time Required: 1 Hour

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| Lesson Description |
| The information below provides the instructor with an overview of the lesson and the materials that are required to effectively present this instruction. |
| TMS # |  |
| Prerequisites | 4203009 |
| target audience | The target audience for **Introduction to Workload Management** is Challenge VSRs.Although this lesson is targeted to teach Challenge VSRs, it may be taught to other VA personnel as mandatory or refresher type training. |
| Time Required | **1 hour** |
| Materials/TRAINING AIDS | Lesson materials:* **Introduction to Workload Management** PowerPoint Presentation
* **Introduction to Workload Management** Trainee Handout
* Claim Attributes Job Aid
 |
| Training Area/Tools  | The following are required to ensure the trainees are able to meet the lesson objectives: * Classroom or private area suitable for participatory discussions
* Seating, writing materials, and writing surfaces for trainee note taking and participation
* Handouts, which include a practical exercise
* Large writing surface (easel pad, chalkboard, dry erase board, overhead projector, etc.) with appropriate writing materials
* Computer with PowerPoint software to present the lesson material

Trainees require access to the following tools: * VA TMS to complete the assessment
 |
| Pre-Planning  | * Become familiar with all training materials by reading the Instructor Lesson Plan while simultaneously reviewing the corresponding PowerPoint slides. This will provide you the opportunity to see the connection between the Lesson Plan and the slides, which will allow for a more structured presentation during the training session.
* Become familiar with the content of the trainee handouts and their association to the Lesson Plan.
* Practice is the best guarantee of providing a quality presentation. At a minimum, do a complete walkthrough of the presentation to practice coordination between this Lesson Plan, the trainee handouts, and the PowerPoint slides and ensure your timing is on track with the length of the lesson.
* Ensure that there are copies of all handouts before the training session.
* When required, reserve the training room.
* Arrange for equipment such as flip charts, an overhead projector, and any other equipment (as needed).
* Talk to people in your office who are most familiar with this topic to collect experiences that you can include as examples in the lesson.
* This lesson plan belongs to you. Feel free to highlight headings, key phrases, or other information to help the instruction flow smoothly. Feel free to add any notes or information that you need in the margins.
 |
| Training Day  | * Arrive as early as possible to ensure access to the facility and computers.
* Become familiar with the location of restrooms and other facilities that the trainees will require.
* Test the computer and projector to ensure they are working properly.
* Before class begins, open the PowerPoint presentation to the first slide. This will help to ensure the presentation is functioning properly.
* Make sure that a whiteboard or flip chart and the associated markers are available.
* The instructor completes a roll call attendance sheet or provides a sign-in sheet to the students. The attendance records are forwarded to the Regional Office Training Managers.
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| Introduction |
| INSTRUCTOR INTRODUCTION | Complete the following:* Introduce yourself
* Orient learners to the facilities
* Ensure that all learners have the required handouts
 |
| time required | **.10 hour** |
| Purpose of Lesson | This lesson is intended to provide an introduction to the concept of workload management as it pertains to the VSR position. Topics that are discussed are claims that require priority processing, an overview of ASPEN, and an overview of the VBMS Work Queue. |
| Lesson ObjectivesSlide 2Handout 2  | In order to accomplish the purpose of this lesson, the VSR will be required to accomplish the following lesson objectives.TheVSRwill be able to: * identify claims that require priority processing
* navigate ASPEN and input daily production and excluded time
* sort and filter the VBMS Work Queue

Each learning objective is covered in the associated topic. At the conclusion of the lesson, the learning objectives will be reviewed. |
| Motivation | Production and workload management are two of four critical elements of the VSR Standards. It is important to build a foundation of good habits early so that production and workload management become second nature for the VSR. While production is important and the main topic of this training, the instructor should remind the VSR that quality is just as critical in completion of casework.  |
| STAR Error code(s) | N/A |
| ReferencesSlide 3Handout 3 | Explain where these references are located in the workplace.All M21-1 references are found in the [Live Manual Website](https://vaww.compensation.pension.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ka/portal.html?encodedHash=%23!agent%2Fportal%2F554400000001034%2Farticle%2F554400000014110%2FM21-1-Part-III-Subpart-i-Chapter-3-Section-B-Processing-Fully-Developed-Claims-FDCs).* [M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 1.D – Claims That Require Priority Processing](https://vaww.compensation.pension.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ka/#!agent/portal/554400000001034/article/554400000020037/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-ii-Chapter-1)
* M21-4 Chapter 2 – Workload Management
	+ [Subchapter I - Overview](https://vaww.compensation.pension.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ka/#!agent/portal/554400000001034/article/554400000011633/Subchapter-I-Overview)
	+ [Subchapter II – Claims and Appeals Workflow Management](https://vaww.compensation.pension.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ka/#!agent/portal/554400000001034/article/554400000011636/Subchapter-II-Claims-and-Appeals-Workfl)
* [M21-4 Chapter 4 – Claims and Appeals Processing Timeliness](https://vaww.compensation.pension.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ka/#!agent/portal/554400000001034/article/554400000011649/Chapter-4-Claims-and-Appeals-Processing)
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| Topic 1: Claims that Require Priority Processing |
| Introduction | There a number of types of claims and claimants that warrant priority processing. While the VA would never consider one Veteran to be more deserving than another, these claims and claimant types do require our utmost attention. |
| Time Required | **.25 hours** |
| OBJECTIVES/Teaching Points | Topic ObjectivesTheVSRwill be able to: * identify claims that require priority processing
 |
| Priority Processing Claim/Claimant TypesSlide 4Handout 4 | Any claim from the following types of claimants is always considered priority:* cases of financial hardship
* homeless
* terminally ill
* former Prisoner of War
* Medal of Honor recipient
* older than 85 years of old
* seriously injured (SI) or very seriously injured (VSI)

Any of the following claim types are considered priority:* Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) or Lou Gehrig’s Disease
* Fully Developed Claims

To be classified as having a financial hardship, the Veteran must submit documentation supporting his assertion. Examples of documentation are:* an eviction notice
* a statement of foreclosure
* past-due utility bills
* collection notices from creditors

42 US Code Section 11302 defines homelessness as an individual or family:* who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence
* whose primary nighttime residence is a place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation
* whose primary residence is a shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements
* who is exiting a temporary living arrangement and would be forced to utilize one of the previous three types of residences
* who is in danger of imminently losing his/her residence (i.e., foreclosure or eviction) and would be forced to utilize one of the previous three types of residences

Upon receipt of any of these claims, the employee must take any and all actions required to move the claim to the next stage before working any non-priority claim.When handling multiple claims that all require priority processing attempt to prioritize. If prioritization is not possible, seek guidance from a veteran VSR or your supervisor. If timely completion of all priority claims is not possible, notify your supervisor immediately. |
| Priority DevelopmentSlide 5Handout 5 | Regional Offices are required to manage priority claims by:* frequently following up on any pending development actions
* utilizing issue specific coordinators, where applicable
* utilizing the telephone for development or follow up actions, whenever possible
* collaborating with any third parties (i.e., the VAMC) to expedite development
 |
| System FlashesSlide 6Handout 5Direct the trainee to the Introduction to Workload Management Job Aid for more information surrounding all available system flashes and when to use them.  | There are a number of different flashes used to identify and track claims that require priority processing (M21-1 III.iii.1.D):* Claimant Flashes
* Claim Flashes
* Special Issue Flashes

Claimant flashes are utilized to identify and track issues that are directly related to the claimant (e.g. homelessness, terminal illness, former POW, or SI/VSI). These issues generally persist from claim-to-claim. Claimant flashes are added in the system using the Corporate Flashes command in SHARE. The VSR should not add these flashes on their own accord. Once the VSR has identified a claimant with a possible claimant-level priority issue, a request should be made to the appropriate person at their RO for a review.Claim flashes are utilized to identify and track issues that are directly related to the claim as a whole and not one specific issue of that claim (e.g. FDC). These issues are resolved when the claim is finalized. Claim flashes are added in the system utilizing VBMS. The VSR is responsible for reviewing the efolder and adding claim-level flashes to the claim as appropriate.Special issue flashes are utilized to identify and track issues that relate directly to a specific contention claimed by the claimant (e.g. ALS). These issues are resolved when a decision has been made on that contention. Special issue flashes are added in the system utilizing VBMS. The VSR is responsible for reviewing the eFolder and adding special issue flashes to the claim as appropriate. |

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| Topic 2: ASPEN Overview |
| Introduction | ASPEN is a web-based program used to track the claims worked and excluded time taken by an employee. ASPEN use is required for all Regional Office personnel working claims, including VSRs. Production statistics are derived from the data stored in the ASPEN database. The cases chosen for quality are also randomly selected utilizing ASPEN. If an employee does not use ASPEN to add the claims worked and excluded time taken, the station cannot complete the employee’s yearly evaluation.  |
| Time Required | **.20 hours** |
| OBJECTIVES/Teaching Points | Topic ObjectivesTheVSRwill be able to: * navigate ASPEN and input daily production and excluded time
 |
| Entering ProductionSlide 8Handout 6At this time, walk the trainees through how to enter/edit a claim into ASPEN. Also, discuss the different action options and when they are used. | Either during the day or at the end of the day, the VSR must enter the work completed for that day into ASPEN. To enter a production item, click on *Add Production Record*. On the next screen, the VSR must enter the date, action, claims processing priority, claim number, and EP. If the claim was worked on overtime, click on the *Worked on Overtime* box. Click on *Update* to save the entry.Reminders:* Each claim worked must be entered separately.
* Although you can change the date, you should always enter your work by the end of COB. You can add a production item up to seven days retroactively.
* Overtime must be entered on the *Employee Time Reporting* screen, before entering production items for that overtime period.

The following are the different VSRs options for action:* 104 – Process award/decision
* 105 – Authorize award
* 106 – Initial Development (1-2 issues)
* 107 – Initial Development (3+ issues)
* 108 – Supplemental Development (1-2 issues)
* 109 – Supplemental Development (3+ issues)
* 110 – Ready for Decision (1-2 issues)
* 111 – Ready for Decision (3+ issues)
* 112 – Telephone Development

Reminders:* Claims for dependency, IU, due process, etc. are considered one issue.
* The 112 count can only be taken if the VSR actually speaks with someone on the phone and, as a result, can move the claim forward.
* You cannot take count for each EP processed (excluding tracking EPs, i.e., 810s).

If a mistake is made and the entry needs to be updated, click on *Workload Reporting* on the main screen. There are a number of filters at the top of the screen to limit the number of entries that show up. Be careful not to search for too large a range of entries as the system can get bogged down.Once the entry is located, click on *Edit* or *Delete*. You can only edit an entry up to seven days retroactively. |
| Entering Excluded TimeSlide 9Handout 7At this time, walk the trainees through how to enter/edit excluded time into ASPEN. Also, discuss the different types of excluded time and when they are used. | Either during the day or at the end of the day, the VSR must enter any excluded time for that day into ASPEN. To enter excluded time, click on *Employee Time Reporting*. On the next screen, click on *Add Time Reporting Record*. On the next screen, enter the date, type of excluded time, total number of hours for that type of excluded time, and a description (if appropriate). Click on *Update* to save the entry.Reminders:* Each type of excluded time must be entered separately.
* Although you can change the date, you should always enter your excluded time by the end of COB. You can add excluded time up to fifteen days retroactively. You can also add excluded time prospectively through the current pay period.

The following are the different types of excluded time:* Deduct – Leave
* Deduct – Training
* Deduct – Second Signature Review of Trainees
* Deduct – Special Projects
* Deduct – Union Time
* Deduct – Other
* Deduct – Credit Hours Taken
* Add – Credit Hours Worked
* Add – Overtime Worked

Reminders:* *Deduct – Other* should only be used sparingly.
* Although leave, credit time, overtime are tracked in VATAS, you still must enter them in ASPEN so that production statistics are accurate.
* All excluded time is subject to approval by your supervisor.

If a mistake is made and the entry needs to be updated, click on *Employee Time Reporting* on the main screen. There are a number of filters at the top of the screen to limit the number of entries that show up. Be careful not to search for too large a range of entries as the system can get bogged down.Once the entry is located, click on *Edit* or *Delete*. You can only edit an entry up to thirty days retroactively. |
| DEMONSTRATION | ASPEN Demonstration |

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| Topic 3: VBMS Work Queue |
| Introduction | The VBMS Work Queue is a great tool to use to sort and filter the claims assigned to the VSR. This will help with identifying priority claims or finding the next best claim to work. |
| Time Required | **.20 hours** |
| OBJECTIVES/Teaching Points | Topic ObjectivesTheVSRwill be able to: * sort and filter the VBMS Work Queue
 |
| Work Queue ColumnsSlide 10-12Handout 8At this time, walk the trainees through how to show/hide different columns. Also, discuss some of the more relevant columns. | There are a large amount of columns on the VBMS Work Queue, too many to utilize efficiently. However, there are a smaller number of columns that are particularly helpful to the VSR when managing their workload. The following columns are some of the more helpful ones:* Date of Claim
* EP Code – Claim Label
* File Number
* Suspense Reason
* Claim Level Status
* Days Assigned to User
* Ready to Recall
* Lifecycle Phase

While these columns are generally considered helpful, the choice is ultimately up to you. To customize your VBMS Work Queue, click on *Show/Hide Columns*. Check the columns you want to be displayed and uncheck the columns that you do not want displayed. You can also control the number of claims that show per page in your VBMS Work Queue. Now that the National Work Queue is active, fifty or one hundred claims in your queue would be an anomaly. Selecting ten or twenty-five is recommended. Once you have your work queue the way you like it, click *Save Preferences*. You can edit the layout of the VBMS Work Queue at any time. |
| **Work Queue Filters**Slide 13-15Handout 8At this time, walk the trainees through how to use the filters in VBMS.  | In addition to the columns in the VBMS Work Queue, you can also filter the claims using the *Narrow Results* feature. Again, there are a large number of different filters to employ in managing your work queue, but only a few are helpful to VSRs. The following filters are helpful:* Keyword
* File Number
* Claim Status
* Lifecycle Phase

Again, there is no requirement to use certain filters and the choice is yours. To use the filters, click on the specific filter(s) you want to use. A field will drop down allowing for different input depending on the filter. You can use one or multiple filters to manage your workload. Once you have your filter(s) set up, click *Filter*. If there is a filter or set of filters that you use frequently, you can save this filter criterion. To do this click *Save*. You can save multiple filter criteria and select them using the drop down at the very top of *Narrow Results* window. If you need to delete or edit a saved filter criterion, click *Manage.* |

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| Lesson Review, Assessment, and Wrap-up |
| Introduction | The Introduction to Workload Management lesson is complete.Review each lesson objective and ask the trainees for any questions or comments. |
| Time Required | **.25 hours**  |
| Lesson Objectives | You have completed the Introduction to Workload Management lesson. The trainee should be able to: * identify claims that require priority processing
* navigate ASPEN and input daily production and excluded time
* sort and filter the VBMS Work Queue
 |
| Assessment  | Remind the trainees to complete the on-line assessment in TMS to receive credit for completion of the course.The assessment will allow the participants to demonstrate their understanding of the information presented in this lesson. |