

Compensation Service (212)
VBA/DoD Collaboration Team
Monthly Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES)
Conference Call Read Ahead
March 13, 2018—2 PM EST

The Compensation Service VBA/DoD Collaboration Team hosts this monthly conference call to announce updates and address issues and questions related to the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) Program. All IDES Military Services Coordinators (MSCs), Disability Rating Activity Sites (DRAS) personnel and other VA personnel supporting IDES are invited to participate.

The following call notes summarize, expand upon, and provide any needed clarification of the topics addressed on the call or on the corresponding read-ahead. This document is not a verbatim recitation of the call or read-ahead. If you have specific questions related to claims, please send them to the [DES Mailbox](#) (VAVBAWAS/CO/DES). A Compensation Service team member will contact you to gather the additional information needed to review and respond to your case. If a pattern is established, and we note several intake sites are having issues, a Compensation Service team member will discuss the topic on the following month's call.

TMS #4438929 has been created to provide training credit for the March 2018 IDES Teleconference. In order to receive the credit, you must sign into TMS and self-assign the course. The evaluation must be completed in order to receive credit for today's call.

Please sign-up for the [C&P Calendar Subscription Service](#) in order to receive notification that the read-ahead is available and for notification when the TMS number is active.

Topics for Discussion

IDES Goals Update

On the February call there was a discussion about new IDES goals that would reduce the standard for processing time from 295/305 days to 230 days. Please note the new goals were not put into effect on March 1, 2018, as indicated during the February Call. Current IDES goals will remain in place until further notice.

Exam Management System (EMS) in VBMS

Exam Management in VBMS was introduced in VBMS Release 14.1 (March 11th); All VSRs, RVSRs, and Pre-Discharge MSCs were instructed to complete these five on-line training items in TMS by March 9th:

- VA 4415934 Introduction to Exam Management in VBMS
- VA 4415942 Creating Exam Scheduling Request in VBMS
- VA 4415941 Exam Scheduling Request Submission Status and Exam Activity
- VA 4415947 Request for Clarification/Modification Request/Rework Request in Exam Management
- VA 4415952 Exam Scheduling Request in VBMS for Individual Unemployability Claims

Currently, the only IDES exam provider supported by EMS is VES, which provides IDES examinations in OCONUS locations.

At this time, MSCs must continue to submit IDES exam requests to QTC through CAATS, and submit IDES exam requests to VHA through CAPRI in accordance with [M21-1 III.i.2.D.6](#). Users will be notified when QTC and VHA are ready to accept Pre-Discharge exam scheduling requests through EMS.

Note: QTC is able to process regular Compensation/Pension exam scheduling requests via EMS.

The ERRA tool will continue providing guidance to ensure the exam scheduling request is routed to the appropriate vendor and submitted through the correct VBA system. As a reminder, the ERRA tool is only mandatory for IDES participants who are not located at or near the referring MTF (in accordance with [M21-1 III.i.2.D.6.r](#)).

Field users should submit a ticket to the National Service Desk (NSD) if they encounter technical issues under the new Exam Management 14.1 functionality. For other questions or issues related to Exam Management in VBMS please email ContractExam.VBAVACO@va.gov and cc the [DES Mailbox](#).

Service Department Memorandum of Complete and Current Service Treatment Records (STRs)

MSCs must review IDES referral packages to ensure the referral is proper in accordance with [M21-1 III.i.2.D.3.d \(step 4\)](#). MSCs must ensure that the STR memo (sample provided in [M21-1 III.i.2.D.2.c](#)), which certifies that all known STRs have been provided and indicates any missing records and the efforts made to obtain them, is provided with each IDES referral. If the STR memo was not provided, the referral should be considered incomplete and handled in accordance with [M21-1 III.i.2.D.3.d \(step 5\)](#).

To facilitate the DRAS's eFolder review, MSCs should practice proper eFolder maintenance. Specifically, when MSCs upload the STR memo to the eFolder, they must ensure that the memorandum is appropriately indexed (per [M21-1 III.i.2.D.3.e](#)) using the Document Type, *Service Department Memo of Complete and Current Service Treatment Record*. If the PEBLO provides the STR memo electronically, as part of a larger PDF that contains STRs, MSCs are encouraged to use the bookmark function in the VBMS eFolder to call attention to the document. For more information about eFolder maintenance, refer to [M21-1 III.ii.4.G.2](#); for more information about Bookmarking an eFolder Document refer to [M21-1 III.ii.4.G.2.n](#) and the [VBMS Job Aid – eFolder Fundamentals: Associating Documents to Claims \(Tagging Documents\) & Bookmarking Documents](#).

Question: The PEBLO continues to submit the STR memo and indicates missing records that are in the process of being obtained. Should we accept this as a complete referral package?

CS: No; the referral package is not complete if the missing records are in transit. Follow the guidance in [M21-1 III.i.2.D.3.d](#) to return the package to the PEBLO as an incomplete referral.

Exit Interviews

MSCs are reminded that exit interviews must be conducted within 10 business days of the Exit Interview Start Date in VTA. Exit Interview procedures are discussed in [M21-1 III.i.2.E.5.a and b](#). There is no need or requirement for the participant to have orders to conduct the Exit Interview.

Note: [M21-1 III.i.2.E.5.a](#) will be updated to remove the reference to the Final Disposition Date, and to reflect the new Exit Interview Start Date field in VTA.

Question: I've seen cases where the Servicemember requests an FPEB appeal, which is in pending status; however, a Final Disposition Date was entered in VTA. When should the Final Disposition Date be entered?

CS: The PEBLO should not enter a final disposition date until all appeals have been exhausted. If the PEBLO enters a final disposition date incorrectly please email the [DES Mailbox](#) for resolution.

Failure to Report to Exams for Referred Conditions

When a Servicemember fails to report to exams for referred conditions, the MSC must confer with the PEBLO to determine how best to proceed. Currently, [M21-1 III.i.2.D.7.k](#) discusses two options for proceeding: 1) disenrollment from IDES, or 2) rescheduling the exams.

However, in some instances (particularly after unsuccessful attempts to reschedule the exam), the MEB may decide that the best course of action will be continuation of the IDES process without C&P examinations for the referred conditions. In these instances,

- the MSC must:
 - obtain written documentation from the PEBLO that the MEB and PEB can proceed without the C&P examination,
 - enter the current date as the Examination End Date and Medical Evaluation End Date in VTA, and
- the DRAS will evaluate the condition on the basis of the evidence of record.

Compensation Service will submit a request to update [M21-1 III.i.2.D.7.k](#) to reflect this scenario.

Question: What if a Servicemember misses an exam for a claimed condition?

CS: The MSC must consider the circumstances of each case and use their own discretion to determine whether the Servicemember failed to report due to good cause. For the definition of good cause, refer to [M21-1 I.1.C.3.n](#). When a participant misses exams without good cause, DRAS will address the claimed condition based on the evidence of record.

If an exam is rescheduled for a referred disability, then MSCs should reschedule the exam(s) for claimed disabilities as well ([M21-1 III.i.2.D.7.k](#)).

Question: How long are exams valid for?

CS: Examination results do not become “invalid” after any specific period of time. In IDES cases, DRAS can consider examination results that are more than one year old if the participant

agrees that the severity of the disabilities at issue has not changed since the prior examination, in accordance with [M21-1 III.i.2.D.6.m.](#)

Question: How will the DRAS know when the decision was actively made to proceed without exams versus if the condition was overlooked or missed?

CS: The MSC should add notes in VTA and VBMS to indicate the MEB decided to proceed without examinations for the referred conditions. If there was no exam, and the record does not contain any evidence indicating the MEB's decision to proceed, the DRAS should contact the MSC for clarification.

Denying Service Connection for Referred Conditions

DRAS must assign evaluations to *all* referred conditions, even when the evidence of record does not support a grant of service connection. When service connection cannot be granted for a referred condition, the proposed rating must include

- a disability evaluation for PEB purposes only, and
- a clear indication that the evaluation is for PEB purposes only, and that service-connection cannot be established for VA benefit purposes.

Note: On final ratings, these conditions must be denied straightforwardly, with no reference to any evaluation assigned solely for PEB purposes.

Handling Requests for Reconsideration when Service Connection is Denied for Referred Conditions

IDES participants may submit requests for reconsideration of evaluations assigned to referred conditions, even if service connection was denied. However, only the *evaluations* (not the denial) of referred conditions are subject to reconsideration requests—denial of service connection is only subject to appeal *after* the rating is finalized.

However, if new evidence is submitted with a reconsideration request that that would reverse the proposed denial, then the DRAS must prepare an updated proposed rating to reflect a proposed grant.

Providing Evaluations of Referred Conditions involving In-Service Aggravation

When a referred condition involves in-service aggravation, DRAS should address the aggravation in the IDES proposed rating in general accordance with standard rating procedures (as outlined in [M21-1 IV.ii.2.B.4](#)). No special action or language is required in IDES proposed ratings in cases involving in-service aggravation.

Proposed Ratings for Non-Active Duty (NAD) Participant Declines to File a VA Claim

If an NAD participant declines to file a VA claim as part of the IDES process, the DRAS must handle the case in accordance with [M21-1 III.i.2.F.10.a](#), and prepare a “proposed” rating for PEB-purposes under the EP 689.

The IDES Staff at Compensation Service is now preparing manual updates to:

- Add note to [M21-1 III.i.2.F.2.d.](#), to specifically indicate that when NAD Veterans decline to submit a VA claim, the case should be handled in accordance with [M21-1 III.i.2.F.10.a](#)
- add this scenario to the list of examples of when the DRAS must prepare “proposed” ratings in NAD cases (currently shown in [M21-1 III.i.2.E.3.o](#)).
- Revise [M21-1III.i.2.E.3.a](#) to allow for EP 310 to be cleared in these instances.

Compensation Service 212D MSC Information SharePoint Site

IDES Coaches/POCs are reminded to keep the information about your RO/intake sites updated on this [SharePoint](#) site. Access can be requested through the SharePoint or contact Andrew.reese@va.gov.

Veterans Tracking Application (VTA) Reminders

VTA Training

VTA Training is March 20 (9ET) and 21 (1ET).

Next Teleconference

The next IDES Teleconference Call is scheduled for Tuesday, April 10, 2018, at 2PM EST. Please submit questions and proposed topics for discussion to the [DES Mailbox](#) no later than COB, Thursday, March 29, 2018.

Open Floor