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Compensation Service (212)
VBA/DoD Collaboration Team
Monthly Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES)
and Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) Conference Call Notes
June 12, 2018—2 PM EDT
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The VBA/DoD Collaboration Staff is reassessing the need for having separate BDD and IDES monthly conference calls. Now that both programs are more established, we feel combining the two calls will aid in reducing the overlap created by having separate calls, and in turn provide time back to you to accomplish your mission of serving our Servicemembers. We also hope this will be a benefit to BDD and IDES claims processors by providing all Pre-Discharge guidance in a single format, thus improving your knowledge of both programs. While we know not everyone processes both BDD and IDES claims, we feel it will be a great benefit to Servicemembers by having all of our employees who serve them aware of the Pre-Discharge process as a whole, thereby improving the service we provide.

We will continue having the combined calls on the 2nd Tuesday of each month and will reassess the need for separate calls in the future, if necessary. For those newly joining this call from the BDD call, please see the information below to ensure you receive the notifications on the call notes and TMS instructions.

The Compensation Service VBA/DoD Collaboration Team hosts this monthly conference call to announce updates and address issues and questions related to the IDES and BDD Programs. All Military Services Coordinators (MSCs), Disability Rating Activity Sites (DRAS), Regional Offices and other VA personnel supporting IDES and BDD 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 IDES Mailbox (VAVBAWAS/CO/IDES). 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.

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.

Call in numbers: 844-358-7954, 844-210-0201, 844-894-0415; Conference ID: 26520195
Join online meeting
https://meet.RTC.VA.GOV/andrew.reese/84K5ZZFM

IDES and BDD Topics for Discussion

MSC Conference

The first National Training Conference for Military Services Coordinators was held May 22-24, 2018 at the Indianapolis Hilton Hotel. Thanks to all MSCs who participated and helped make the conference a success.

The second conference dates and location are TBD. If you did not attend the first conference, you will be scheduled for the second conference. The Office of Field Operations (OFO) will coordinate with the District and Regional Offices to arrange MSC attendance. MSCs should receive notification and further information through those channels.

Note: If you did not attend the first conference, please ensure you have a Concur account (travel) and a Government Credit Card. If you do not have these, please work with your supervisor to obtain them.

MSC Availability
MSCs must be available during scheduled duty hours. If MSCs are teleworking or on leave, contact information should be posted on office doors, and create an out of office message with contact information in Outlook and on voicemail.

No Limitation on Claimed Conditions on VA Form 21-526EZ
MSCs are reminded that they may not attempt to limit or regulate the number or type of conditions that an IDES participant claims on VA Form 21-526EZ. The MEB or PEB may find that claimed conditions also impact the member's ability to serve; therefore, it is critical that the member is afforded the opportunity to claim any condition, including those already service connected. Under no circumstances should an MSC restrict or discourage claimants from claiming any condition(s) they feel were incurred in or aggravated by their military service.

Pre-Discharge Collaboration Network
Employees who support VA Pre-Discharge programs are encouraged to join the Pre-Discharge Collaboration Network on VA Pulse to participate in discussions, collaborate, and share knowledge. The Pre-Discharge Collaboration Network does not establish new policy or procedure. Current BDD and IDES policy and procedures can be found in M21-1 III.i.2. Any change to policy or procedure will be announced through formal channels. If you have a policy or procedural question that requires a formal response please contact the IDES Mailbox or Pre-Discharge BDD Mailbox.

Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Liaisons
MSCs are allowed to be present during VA TAP briefings to observe (space permitting). The TAP contractors cannot get anyone on an installation, they can only provide when and where the briefing is taking place. If you are experiencing any issues with the TAP briefer at your installation, or for any additional TAP related questions, please contact the TAP liaisons below.

Branch of Service	TAP Liaison
Army	Raymond.Joe@va.gov
Navy	Michael.Caldwell3@va.gov
Air Force	Marilyn.Ragin@va.gov

Marine Corps/Coast Guard	Joseph.Lattimer@va.gov

EP 336 and IDES Referrals

Seattle DRAS has reported multiple instances where the Servicemember is enrolled in the IDES program, but the claims processor has established an EP 336 and brokered the EP 336 to the Seattle RO. Per M21-1 III.i.2.D.3.d, an EP 689 with the Disability Evaluation System claim label must be established for all IDES referrals. An EP 336 with a *BDD* claim label is only established for BDD claims per M21-1 III.i.2.A.2.c.

Examination Management System (EMS) Issues

An intake site must be included in the EMS examination request to prevent it from being rejected. If there is not an intake site entered and you are unable to enter an intake site in SHARE or VBMS, cancel the EP, establish the claim again in VBMS, and enter an intake site. If you are unable to determine an intake site, you may enter the RO location nearest to the Servicemember's address for the intake site.

If you are experiencing EMS issues, submit a help ticket to *Your IT* Services. You can access *Your IT Services* by clicking on the "Your IT" icon on your desktop, which will automatically open in the Chrome web browser. There are further Training videos and a user guide for this platform. You can also contact the Contract Exam Inquiry Mailbox and include the specific issues and claim numbers.

The Mandatory Contract Exam Staff will be available during Open Floor and will discuss EMS issues/concerns received from MSCs and answer any additional questions.

What should we do if the exam is stuck in processing status and will not submit the exam request or returned for a clarification and EMS will not allow us to address the clarification request?
If the exam is stuck in processing status and will not submit the exam request; submit a help ticket in the YourIT portal and include the specific issues and claim numbers. If EMS will not allow you to address the clarification request, submit a help ticket in the YourIT portal and contact the Mandatory Contract Exam Inquiry Mailbox and include the specific issues and claim numbers. The Mandatory Contract Exam Staff and OBPI are currently working to resolve issues for exams requested in EMS. The Enterprise Service Desk is collecting the help tickets while EMS issues continue to be addressed to fix the overall system; therefore, they cannot prioritize individual help tickets.

ERRA is giving me LHI as the contract exam vendor and they don't do the SHA at my location, what should I do?
ERRA no longer provides vendors and only directs to request the exam through VBMS or CAPRI. All CONUS contract exams should go to QTC. When establishing Pre-Discharge claims, please ensure:
- the Pre-Discharge button is selected in VBMS,
- the claim is established correctly with the correct EP (336, 010, 110, 020 or 021),

- the correct BDD claim label or non-BDD claim label for BDD excluded claims has been selected,
- the correct *Pre-Discharge Type* of *BDD* for all BDD claims and *Quick Start* for all BDD excluded claims has been selected, and.
- a *BDD-excluded* special issue for one of the contentions that require an exam for all BDD excluded claims has been added.

All these steps need to be completed correctly to ensure EMS provides the correct contract exam vendor. If these steps have been completed correctly and you still experience any issues, contact the Mandatory Contract Exam Inquiry Mailbox with the claim numbers and issue.

Gulf War (GW) Undiagnosed Illness and Contract Examinations
An initial claim for disability based on GW undiagnosed illness is excluded from contract examinations and included on the Contract Examination Exclusions List. Follow-up examinations may be ordered through contract examination providers. However, initial GW examinations should be sent to VHA and not an examination contractor. The initial GW examination should include the Separation Health Assessment (SHA) DBQ, not the Gulf War General Medical DBQ, and should include the Notice to Examiners in Southwest Asia claims in the remarks which can be found in M21-1 IV.ii.1.E.2.m. IDES reference is M21-III.i.2.D.6.g.

IDES Topics for Discussion

DES Email Address Change
The DES VA Corporate email address has changed from DESPilot.VBACO@va.gov to IDES.VBACO@va.gov. It will display as VAVBAWAS/CO/IDES.

Providing IDES Exam Appointment Information to the PEBLOs
When requested, MSCs will provide exam appointment information to the PEBLOs within 48 hours after all exams have been scheduled. VHA exam appointment information is available in CAPRI and QTC/VES exam appointment information is available in VBMS/EMS.

IDES MSC to Review Examination Reports
MSCs are reminded of the requirements in M21-1,III.i,2.D.7.c. Specifically, MSCs must: *Complete a thorough review of exam reports once they become available. Ensure the reports are complete before providing results to the PEBLO or entering the Medical Evaluation End Date (MEED) in VTA. MSCs must carefully review their examination request and all examination results to confirm that;*

- *the request included all claimed and referred conditions*
- *all issues noted on the examination request have been addressed by the examiner*
- *all requested DBQs have been completed by the examiner, and*
- *all specific testing required by individual DBQs has been completed*

Note: *In cases where the MSC identifies missing, incomplete, or insufficient DBQs, or where examinations were not requested for all claimed and referred conditions, the MSC must obtain the missing or deficient examination information before providing the results to the PEBLO and entering the MEED.*

If the MSC enters the MEED and then determines an exam is missing, was not completed, and/or all exams were not forwarded to the PEBLO, the MSC must remove and update the MEED to reflect the date when all exams are provided to the PEBLO.

IDES MSC Information on MSC SharePoint Site
MSC Coaches/Supervisors are requested to update their ROs data on MSC SP Site.
New data fields have been added. Contact andrew.reese@va.gov if you have access or input issues.
   1. Click IDES MSC List
   2. Find your data lines and highlight
   3. Click Items above the VA Seal
   4. Click Edit Item
   5. Update and Save

Please have all updates completed by June 20th, 2018.

Entering MSC/PEBLO Contact Information in EMS
Currently, EMS requires entry of MSC and PEBLO contact information, including name, phone, email, and mailing addresses. While some exam providers may use the name/phone/email to request or share information—the mailing address information is not used by examiners. Further, looking up this address information can be time consuming and burdensome for DRAS users, and in all cases keying in these addresses is an extraneous task. Considering this, we've requested the MSC/PEBLO address fields be removed (or made optional) in EMS.

In the interim, MSCs and DRAS personnel will not be required to ensure accurate address information is entered in the Address Lines 1-3. Users are permitted to enter a single digit, such as "x" in these fields.

Further, the *City, State,* and *Zip Code* entries do not need to accurately reflect the MSC/PEBLO information. However, these fields must correctly correspond with each other. VBMS validates city/state/zip combinations and mismatches can create issues. Therefore, when a user does not know the city/state/zip off hand, he or she can simply enter their own city/state/zip.

MSCs and DRAS personnel must continue to ensure that both the MSC and PEBLOs name email and phone numbers are accurately entered into EMS. This information is currently displayed in VTA in the case information above the tabs.

VTA Updates for IDES Participants too Disabled to Travel to Exams
In situations when the IDES participant is too disabled to travel to exams, the MSC must request that the DRAS make a determination whether all referred conditions can be rated on the basis of

the evidence of record. If the DRAS determines that the referred conditions can be rated based on the evidence of record, the MSC must update the SHA Exam Requested Date, Exam End Date, and ME End Date with the date of notification.

The SHA Provider and Site fields are required when the SHA Exam Requested Date is entered. MSCs must select MTF from the SHA Provider dropdown and the MTF location from the SHA Exam Site dropdown in these situations until VTA is updated.

How are claimed conditions rated for these SMs?
DRAS will use the STRs to rate the claimed conditions.

PEBLO/IDES MSC Dispute Resolution
When IDES MSCs and PEBLOs disagree on the application or interpretation of IDES policy (such as when referral packages should be returned or when Prepare Claim Start Dates should be changed), the MSC should engage his or her supervisor to assist with resolution. If the disagreement cannot be resolved locally, please contact the IDES Mailbox for assistance. Please describe all steps taken to resolve the conflict locally in the email to the IDES Mailbox.

VTA Reminders
➢ DRAS - Proposed Rating End Date should **not** be changed after original proposed rating is sent to the PEB
  ▪ Duty Status Discrepancies must be resolved before entering Final Rating Information
➢ MSCs - Exam end date remains a required entry. MSCs must enter the date the provider(s) released ALL exams (SHA/GM/Specialty) and the complete medical evaluation report(s)

VTA Training
VTA Training is June 19 (9 AM EDT) and 20 (1PM EDT). Information is listed on the VTA Homepage under Calendar of Events.

BDD Topics for Discussion

Participant Profile and Future RAD Date
Some intake sites/ROs have reported using Participant Profile to add the future RAD date for BDD claimants. BDD claims processors should discontinue this practice since it creates problems when generating the award in VBMS Awards.

VBMS Awards will not allow the user to generate an award for an in-service rating prior to RAD if there is not a complete period of service entered in SHARE or the Participant Profile. An award should never be generated prior to the day after RAD; however, several awards have been authorized prior to RAD due to a future RAD being entered into the Participant Profile. Service data should only be entered into the Participant Profile as needed when the service has been verified after discharge.

Does a discharge date have to be in Participant Profile or SHARE in order to complete an In-Service rating in VBMS-R?

No, the OBPI/VBMS staff has confirmed an In-Service rating can be finalized without a RAD date in Participant Profile or SHARE.

Foreign Claims
A *Foreign Claim* corporate flash must be assigned per M21-4, Appendix B, Section I.f for all foreign claims when the Servicemember is remaining overseas. This is essential for proper NWQ routing of these foreign claims.

What do we do with BDD Excluded claims? Are we supposed to develop and request examinations?
Per M21-1 III.i.2.B.3.a, generate the *BDD excluded* letter using the Letter Creator tool and provide it to the Servicemember. The claims processor also needs to establish the claim with EPs 010, 110, or 020 as appropriate to the claim type with a non-BDD claim label (original <8 issues, original 8+ issues, new, increase, reopen) per M21-1 III.i.2.A.2.h. The claims processor also needs to enter all contentions and either scan the documents locally or send to VCIP scanning. Per M21-1 III.i.2.B.3.e, to ensure a timely decision on the BDD-excluded claim, any required development, (such as requests for records or a VA examination) should be initiated while the Servicemember is still on active duty, when possible.

BDD Excluded claims should be processed by the Regional Office of Jurisdiction (ROJ). These claims are not required to be processed by MSCs; however, it is up to the ROJ management to determine how these claims are distributed for action.

Current Program Timeliness
As outreach specialists and VA's frontline contact with SMs and Veterans, it is vital that we are realistic in our communications regarding claims processing times. Below is the current program timeliness data as of June 7, 2018.

June 7, 2018	BDD
Completed FYTD	24,278
Receipts FYTD	23,912
Pending	5,098
% Pending >125 Days	21.1%
# Pending >125 Days	1,074
Average Days Pending	77.7
Avg. Days to Complete FYTD	71.6

Source: PA&I Daily Output Reports, 06/06/18

From the Pre-Discharge BDD Mailbox
Question: What should we do when a Servicemember with a pending BDD claim is referred into the IDES program?

   Answer: Follow the below procedures in M21-1 III.i.2.D.8.c.

Responsible Party	Description of Necessary Action(s)

IDES/MSC	• Explain to the participant that because he/she will not be discharge as planned,
	    ◦ the BDD/pre-discharge claim will be closed, and
	    ◦ he/she will have an opportunity to submit a claim via the IDES process.
	 • Notify the RO with jurisdiction over the BDD/pre-discharge claim that the claimant has been retained on active duty and referred to IDES.
	 • Process the IDES claim in accordance with standard IDES procedures.

SOJ/rating activity site	Process the BDD/pre-discharge EP in accordance with M21-1, Part III, Subpart i, 2.B.4.i.

Question: How do I obtain SAFE access?

> **Answer:** SAFE does not require any access. Visit the SAFE site and select "Click here for Getting Started Guide." If you do not have a CAC, select *Click Here* under "Non-CAC Users" on the SAFE homepage.

Question: What is the policy concerning failure to report for BDD claims? I know that the Servicemember must be available within 10 to 45 days from the date they submit their BDD claim. If they fail to report, can they participate in the Fully Developed Claim (FDC) program?

> **Answer:** Per M21-1 III.i.2.A.1.e, if the Servicemember fails to report for examination and it was not the fault of the VA, such as the VA did not provide the examining facility with the Servicemember's correct mailing address, then the claim is excluded from BDD. The EP should be changed to the appropriate rating EP with a non-BDD claim label. Since the Servicemember failed to report for examination, and if it was not the fault of VA, the claim is also excluded from the FDC program per M21-1 III.i.3.B.2.b.

> **Please Note:** The Servicemember could be entitled to have their exam rescheduled as a BDD excluded claim if they meet the "good cause" requirements noted in M21-1 I.1.C.3.n.

Open Floor

Can we go back to using CAATS until the issue with EMS is corrected?
At this time, there is no plan to revert to CAATS.

Can OFO put out guidance/statement concerning the delay of exams in EMS?
Please check with your RO as several emails have been sent from OFO concerning the EMS issues.

Are there any restrictions on claiming sleep apnea?
No. If a sleep study is in the STRs, note that a sleep study exists, location where the exam was conducted, date of exam, and diagnosis in the comments section under the contention. If there is no sleep study, the exam will need to be ordered as any other specialty exam would.

Are we using EMS to order VHA exams?
No. VHA exams are ordered through CAPRI.

Next Teleconference

The next IDES/BDD Conference Call is scheduled for Tuesday, July 10, 2018 at 2PM EDT. Please submit IDES questions and proposed topics for discussion to the IDES Mailbox, and BDD questions and proposed topics for discussion to the Pre-Discharge BDD Mailbox no later than COB, Thursday, June 28, 2018.