

Compensation Service
Pre-Discharge & Interagency Collaboration Staff (212)
Monthly Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES)
and Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) Conference Call Notes
July 10, 2018—2 PM ET

The Compensation Service Pre-Discharge & Interagency Collaboration Staff 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. To receive notifications related to the IDES and BDD call, please sign-up for the [C&P Calendar Subscription Service](#).

The following call notes summarize, expand upon, and provide any needed clarification of the topics addressed on the July call or on the corresponding read-ahead. This document is not a verbatim recitation of the discussion.

Topics for Discussion

Examination Management System (EMS) Issues

EMS continues to have issues with exam delays. Programmers and other personnel are working around the clock to correct the issues. 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. You can also contact the Contract Exam Inquiry Mailbox and include the specific issues and **claim numbers**.

The Mandatory Contract Exam Staff will now be available until 2:30 pm to 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?

See the OFO email dated 10 July 2018, titled “EMS Guidance to the Field” which included a job aid titled “EMS Defect Resolution Job Aid.” See “Attachment 1” on the VA intranet site for this call.

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.

We have had the developers flown in as of last week and will be rolling out guidance on this issue. We know that this has been frustrating - it has been for us as well. Please continue to submit IT tickets. They are not being ignored, there were simply no answers to resolve the issues, but we are finally getting some and you should be seeing guidance from us soon.

Can someone from CO confirm if PCAN is an approved workaround for stuck EMS cases?

No, this practice is not authorized. MSCs should not cancel EPs as a workaround to EMS delays. This practice results in extraneous help tickets which are left to be resolved by IT staff, and may result in duplicative appointments and examinations.

At this time, no workaround or solution has been approved for cases delayed by EMS defects. MSCs should handle these delays in strict accordance with the *EMS Defect Resolution Job Aid*.

What are we supposed to tell the Servicemembers who are complaining about the delays with their examinations and claim?

The issue is being addressed by multiple VA business lines and we hope to have the issue resolved soon.

When I established the BDD claim the Servicemember had between 180 to 90 days before RAD. Now, his RAD has changed and he is now under 90 days, do I establish the claim as excluded now?

If the RAD date has changed and the Servicemember no longer qualifies for BDD, yes, the EP must be P-changed to a rating EP (010, 110, or 020) with a non-BDD claim label and the claim should be processed as a BDD Excluded claim. However, do not cancel any examinations that have been requested.

Should we wait until the examination is accepted prior to changing the 336 BDD EP to the BDD rating EP, and releasing from our work queue? If we change the EP 336 to a rating EP after we request the examinations, we are not notified if a clarification request is submitted through EMS. Also, we cannot work the clarification request since the claim has been routed to another RO.

No, this is not necessary since NWQ will route claims with clarification requests to any RO based on capacity. Therefore, once the examination has been requested and no further development is needed, change to the EP 336 to a rating EP with a BDD claim label without waiting for the exam request to be accepted by the contractor. The RO that receives the claim will address the clarification request. NWQ is working on developing functionality to route the claim back to the RO that requested the examination when a clarification request is received. When this functionality is released, we will provide guidance in the subsequent monthly BDD/IDES Conference Call.



There have been cases when the EMS help ticket was closed but the issue was not resolved, what should we do?

If the EMS help ticket was not actually resolved, resubmit the EMS help ticket.

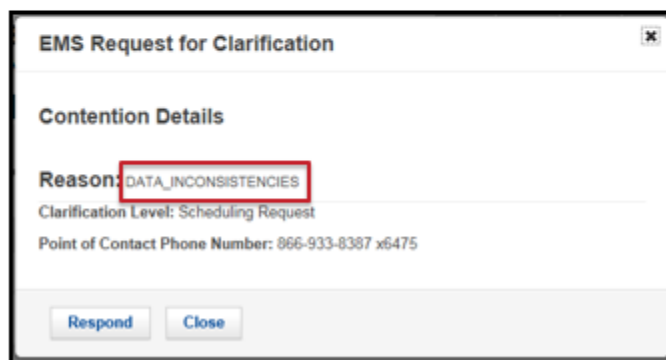
How do I view the clarification request in EMS? All it shows is data inconsistencies.

Follow the below steps to view the clarification requests.

- To view the reason for the Clarification Request (CR) from the vendor, you must click on the icon with the red "!" indicator.



- Some erroneously show "Data Inconsistencies" or "Other".




- If the "Reason" for the Clarification Request is "Data Inconsistencies" or "Other", you must click on the Actions dropdown on the Exam request.



- Select "View History" from the Actions options presented.



- Expand the “Clarification Request Received”.


 Mar 12, 2018 4:04:37 PM - Clarification Request Received

- Review the full request from the vendor.

Mar 12, 2018 4:04:37 PM - Clarification Request Received

Direction: EMS to VBMS
Scheduling Request Status: OPEN
EMS Reason for Clarification: Per our contract, we are prohibited from performing Gulf War General Medical exams. 1. May we perform the DBQ Intestines (other than surgical) in lieu of the DBQ Gulf War exam in order to fully evaluate the veteran's claim at this time? Thank you.

- Return to the Exams tab and click the “!” icon again.


Exam Request  OPEN 03/15/2018 12:04 PM 04/02/2018 10:40 AM Actions

- Click respond

EMS Request for Clarification

Contention Details

Reason: DATA_INCONSISTENCIES
Clarification Level: Scheduling Request
Point of Contact Phone Number: 866-933-8387 x6475

 Respond Close

- Provide your response and submit

Clarification Request Response:

MSC Standards

On July 1, 2018, VBA began operating under newly adopted national performance standards for Military Service Coordinators (MSC). We know there are many questions about these standards and how they will be implemented. Many of these questions have already been submitted to the



Office of Field Operations (OFO) by the Districts and Regional Offices and answers have been provided. We encourage you to contact your local management with any questions that you have so that these questions can go through the proper channels and ensure consistent responses are provided.

Please Note: Answers to questions regarding quality measures will be forthcoming, as the quality staff is in the process of finalizing the QMS checklist descriptors.

Where is info posted, to include FAQs, about the standards?

The FAQs were distributed to all Regional Offices in June 2018.

What Challenge course will MSCs have to attend? Is it mandatory?

The Challenge course is mandatory for full and part time MSCs. MSCs must attend both the IWT (Instructor-Led Web-Based Training) and the pre-development portion of Challenge to effectuate their standards.

Are we going to discuss the new implementation of WATRS which affect all MSC's? We need answers regarding WATRS.

An issue has been identified with the bulk creation of the WATRS accounts created for PMC VSRs, MSCs, and associated management staff on June 29, 2018. Please suspend all data entry into WATRS for PMC VSRs and MSCs until further notice.

More information will be provided as it becomes available.

Thank you,
Office of Field Operations – Operations Analysis
See <https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/OFO/watrs.asp>

I am not using WATRS right now because my user name has been changed to other people's names and I received an email last week to not do anything until notified.

WATRS Cross Assignment issues should be reported to the IT help desk immediately using the YourIT link.

I do have questions and we are not sure of the functionality of WATRS. What exactly is considered a transaction? Is every case that we open looked at? For example, if I am checking the status of the claim, am I being looked at or do I actually have to order an exam, CEST, or open or close a tracked item? I imagine the latter, but I want to make sure.

Transactional credit can be found at
<https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/20/opai/pai/wkld/2010/files/tableau/TransactionRule.htm>

Will CO publish the MSC QMS checklist descriptors?

Yes, the descriptors will be published.



VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Will there be any training for MSCs that have not processed BDD claims before and only processed IDES claims?

Yes, BDD claims processing training was provided at the two MSC training conferences in May 2018 and August 2018. Additionally, all MSCs were required to take the Pre-Discharge training that was provided in September 2017 prior to the rollout of the BDD redesign.

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 is projected to be the week of August 20-24, 2018 (location to be determined). The conference is not for new MSCs only, it is for all MSCs. The focus of the conference will be on MSC responsibilities when processing IDES and BDD claims, and to provide MSCs the opportunity to network and share IDES and BDD techniques and procedures. 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.

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 Conference Q&A Document

Compensation Service received many questions during the MSC Training Conference held May 22-24, 2018. The questions and responses are available [here](#).

IDES Specific Topics

Establishment of EP 689

MSCs are reminded to establish EP 689 using the *Disability Evaluation System* claim label in VBMS. In addition, MSCs must select the following during claims establishment:

- PREDISCHARGE claim type indicator
- IDES Pre-Discharge claim type indicator, and
- MEB MTF as the Intake Site when establishing the EP.

If these indicators are not selected the MSC or DRAS employee will be unable to request contract exams using EMS, as EMS requires a Release from Active Duty (RAD) date unless the IDES Pre-Discharge claim type indicator is selected.

Mailing Items to QTC

MSCs should not be mailing items to QTC. If an item is not uploaded locally into VBMS, the item should be sent to the scanning vendor.



Case Documents being sent to Scanning Vendor, rather than Uploading to VBMS

With the approved use of SAFE and the ability to directly upload documents into VBMS, mailing case documents to a PEBLO and/or a scanning vendor should not be occurring. If your RO has a location that is still mailing items to a PEBLO or scanning vendor, the MSC Coach will send an email to the [IDES](#) box with the following information:

1. Military Treatment Facility (MTF)
2. Reason not using SAFE (if applicable)
3. Reason for not directly uploading documents to VBMS

IDES MSC Information on MSC SharePoint Site

MSC Coaches/Supervisors are requested to update their ROs data on [MSC SP Site](#). New data fields of Assistant Coach and MSC Assignment 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 updates completed by July 31st, 2018 and send an email to andrew.reese@va.gov when completed.

IDES Mailbox Inquiries

When sending an email to the IDES box and your email involves a case question, we need more information than is given in the following example: “I have a couple of cases that are now at 35 days without the exams even being scheduled because I can't submit the clarification response to QTC.” Please ensure the case # is provided along with any other pertinent information. This allows us to research your question/issue.

VTA Reminders

Updated VIP/VTA Registration Instructions for VA Users

VIP/VTA Registration Instructions for VA users has been updated (dated June 25, 2018) and are available in Folder 7 (page 3) of the VTA Knowledge Center.

VTA Training

VTA Training is July 17 (9 AM ET) and 18 (1PM ET). Information is listed on the VTA Homepage under Calendar of Events.



BDD Specific Topics

BDD claims received without Service Treatment Records (STRs)

Intake sites and ROs are reminded that BDD claimants are not permanently excluded from the program if they do not provide STRs with their initial application for benefits (VA Form 21-526EZ). Per [M21-1, III.i.2.B.1.j](#), if a Servicemember submits a BDD claim and does not provide STRs for the current period of service, the claim processor must:

- establish an EP 336 with the *Pre-Discharge Excluded* claim label
- enter a note in VBMS indicating that the claim does not meet BDD requirements because it was received without STRs

If the intake site or RO later obtains STRs through follow-up with the Servicemember, and

- at least 90 days remain before discharge, and
- the Servicemember is still able to attend examinations

then the claims processor must change the claim label to the appropriate BDD claim label and process as a BDD claim.

Important Notes

- Development for **current** period of service STRs for Servicemembers who have not yet been discharged requires:
 - contacting the Servicemember by telephone, e-mail, or letter (if telephone and e-mail development is not successful), and
 - assisting the Servicemember in obtaining copies of STRs from the MTF whenever possible.
- A contact list of Military Services Coordinators who can assist in obtaining records from the local MTF can be found on the [pre-discharge website](#).
- Defer examinations that require the Servicemember's STRs if the STRs are unavailable.

Automated Sharing of Completed DBQs for Pre-Discharge Claimants

VBMS recently added automated functionality that forwards completed SHA DBQs to DoD for Pre-Discharge claimants whose exams are requested through EMS. This functionality will also produce notes in VBMS to inform the user of a successful transfer of DBQs to DoD. Currently the new functionality is still being tested for inconsistencies and duplications. As a result, users should continue to follow the guidance in the manual regarding submission of contract SHA exam results to the MTF POCs. Once testing has been successfully completed, updated guidance will be provided.

DD Form 214 Letters

The automated development letter sent to BDD claimants requesting the DD Form 214 from the Servicemember was recently updated in July to improve the letters clarity. An example of the



letter is included below. Also, beginning in July the Servicemembers will now only receive the letter requesting they provide their DD Form 214 at two intervals prior to their discharge from active duty. The first letter will be sent 60 days prior to their reported discharge date and the second letter will be sent 30 days prior.

Please Note: If claims processors continue to receive feedback from Servicemembers after the July update about their receiving more than two of these letters, please let us know by sending examples to the Pre-Discharge mailbox.

Dear JC TEST:

Our records show that you are an active duty Servicemember who submitted a disability claim under the Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) program.

We are working on your claim, but before VA can award benefits we will need to verify your military service. Please submit to VA a copy of your signed DD Form 214, *Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty* as soon as this is received from your Service Department.

Please disregard if you have already submitted your DD214.

How To Submit Your DD Form 214

To initiate processing of your VA claim, you can use any of the following options:

If you	Here is what to do
eBenefits	Logon to your eBenefits account. Select “Work in Process” which is a link on the left. Select the drop down for “Open Claims”. Select “Upload Documents” on your pending claim. Follow the prompts to upload your discharge form.
Mail or Fax	Please mail or fax your discharge form to: Department Of Veterans Affairs Evidence Intake Center P.O. Box 4444 Janesville WI 53547-4444

If the DD 214 is received prior to the 60-30 days, will the letters still go out?

Yes, the letter will still go out since it is automatically generated at 60 and 30 days prior to RAD. However, the above DD Form 214 letter provides instructions to Servicemembers, “Please disregard if you have already submitted your DD214.”



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

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 July 5, 2018.

July 5, 2018	BDD
Completed FYTD	26,781
Receipts FYTD	27,054
Pending	5,737
% Pending >125 Days	19.2%
# Pending >125 Days	1,103
Average Days Pending	71.3
Avg. Days to Complete FYTD	69.9

Source: PA&I Daily Output Reports, 07/06/18

From the Pre-Discharge BDD Mailbox

Question:

For BDD excluded claims we are required to contact the Servicemember to verify that they will be available for exams at his/her current or forwarding address. However, it does not indicate any additional requirements if we do not reach the Servicemember. The additional scenarios provided are based on contact with the Servicemember. Would it be incorrect to request the exams if we don't reach the Servicemember?

Answer: After two unsuccessful attempts to contact the Servicemember, request the examination using the current address (or forwarding address depending on the availability date). We are currently in the process of updating our M21-1 section to provide more clarification on this topic.

Question:

Regarding BDD Excluded claim exams, are we to submit all exam requests using EMS/VBMS?

Answer: No. Users must continue to utilize the [ERRA tool](#) to determine which electronic system should be used to request exams. The EMS system is used for contract examination requests. All VHA examination requests should be completed in CAPRI/VISTA. See M21-1 III.i.2.B.3.b. for more information on processing BDD Excluded Claims.



Open Floor

Who is responsible to PCAN the 689 EP if someone is returned to duty, and has a 336 EP pending?

Pcanning the 689 in RTD cases is a MSC responsibility (per M21-1 III.i.2.E.a).

Should Form 199 be scanned into the VBMS eFolder?

For IDES cases, the 199 should be scanned into VBMS by the Service PEB or the DRAS.

Are there any reports that are generated nationally that will show all ROs timeliness for IDES/BDD Development; Exam Development/Exam Timelines etc. It would be beneficial to have these reports generated daily?

For IDES cases there are MSC Pending Reports under IDES Operational Reports in VTA that will provide IDES Timeliness for Claims Development and Exams. We are currently working with PA&I on the development of a Tableau Dashboard that will provide this info.

For BDD cases, there are no national reports that show exam timeliness. However, the [Tableau BDD/QS Dashboard](#) does provide claims processing timeliness.

Why when establishing a BDD excluded claim in VBMS as an 010 Initial Comp 8+ Issues does the modifier automatically place 011 or 012 as the claim EP?

Be sure no other EP 010, 110, or 020 has been established. Usually, this is why a modifier is being added due to an EP 010 already pending. P-change the EP 011 to 400 and P-clear it. Then, VBMS will allow you to establish an EP 010. If you have specific examples where no other rating EP is pending and you are unable to establish an 010 without a modifier, please send these to the [Pre-Discharge mailbox](#).

Could there be an easier way to enter the intake site when it is missing when the claim is established?

No, if VBMS or SHARE will not allow you to enter the intake site on an existing EP, P-change the EP to a 400, clear the EP 400, establish it again, and enter the intake site.

If we are unable to get the entrance exam and we have been sent all records that the MTF has, do we need a memo of unavailability for the BDD claim? I thought the M21-1 stated that if there were documents covering the whole period we were good and the STR could be considered substantially complete. I thought we only needed memos for IDES referrals?

The “memorandum of unavailability” is no longer required in any case; instead, claim processors are currently required to prepare a “final notification letter,” when STRS (or other federal records) are deemed unavailable (per [M21-1 III.iii.1.C.1.e](#)). However, [M21-1, III.iii. 2.A.1.f](#) indicates that when the STR includes at least one of the documents listed in [M21-1, III.iii. 2.A.1.e](#) for each period of service, the STR should be considered “substantially complete for development purposes.” Therefore, it is not necessary to complete a final notification letter for missing entrance physicals, when the STR is otherwise complete.



In IDES cases, the entrance physical is a required part of the referral package and must be provided by the PEBLO, or have been deemed unavailable, and noted as such on the PEBLO's STR memo. If the entrance physical is noted as unavailable on the STR memo, but the rest of the STR was provided, the MSC does not need to complete a final notification letter. Similarly, If the STRs provided in BDD cases do not include the entrance physical, but are otherwise complete, it is not necessary to complete a final notification letter.

However, a final notification letter is required when the STRs for an *entire POS* are missing (or when the available STRs are inconsistent with the circumstances of the Veteran's service—e.g., lacking records over an extended period). In these circumstances, MSCs processing IDES cases must prepare the final notification letter before transferring the claim to DRAS.

I keep getting LHI as the contract vendor for BDD claims, what should I do?

All CONUS BDD claims go to the QTC vendor. Be certain the claim is established correctly with the correct EP, BDD claim label or non-BDD claim label for BDD excluded. Ensure the correct *Pre-Discharge Type* is entered as *BDD* for BDD claims and *Quick Start* for BDD excluded claims when establishing the claim. Verify that a *BDD - Excluded* special issue is added to one of the contentions that require an examination for BDD excluded claims only. All these steps are essential to ensure the accurate EMS results are generated. If these steps are completed and you are still receiving inaccurate EMS vendor recommendations, send the details of the issue to the [Contract Examination mailbox](#).

Next Teleconference

There will be no IDES/BDD Conference Call in August. The next call is scheduled for Tuesday, **September 11**, 2018 at 2PM ET. 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, August 30, 2018.



VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs