(VSR VIP Pre-D) Introduction to Reviewing Service Treatment Records (STRs)

Instructor Lesson Plan

Time Required: 2.25 Hours

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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 # | 4484260 |
| Prerequisites | None |
| target audience | The target audience for Introduction to Reviewing Service Treatment Records (STRs) is the entry-level VSR.  Although this lesson is targeted to teach entry-level VSRs, it may be taught to other VA personnel as mandatory or refresher type training. |
| Time Required | 2.25 hours |
| Materials/ TRAINING AIDS | Lesson materials:   * Service Treatment records PowerPoint Presentation * Service Treatment records and Other Medical Evidence Trainee Handouts (including freestanding SOAP Exercise) * Service Treatment records and Other Medical Evidence Job Aid * Compensation Service Intranet |
| 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 * C&P Service Web Site * VBMS |

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| 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 easel, 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 easel and the associated markers are available. * Provide a sign in sheet and at the conclusion of the session, ensure that all trainees sign in. |

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| Introduction to Reviewing Service Treatment Records (STRs) | |
| INSTRUCTOR INTRODUCTION | Complete the following:   * Introduce yourself * Orient learners to the facilities * Ensure that all learners have the required handouts |
| time required | 0.25 hours |
| Purpose of Lesson  Explain the following: | This lesson is intended to give trainees an overview of how to review Service Treatment Records (STRs) and other medical evidence. This lesson will contain discussions and exercises that will allow you to gain a better understanding of:   * Definition * Basic Organization * General Information Found in STRs * How to Identify the Entrance and Separation Physical Exam * How to Efficiently Review Records * Subjective, Objective, Assessment, Plan (SOAP) Format |
| Lesson Objectives  Discuss the following:  Slide 2  Handout 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:   * Define Service Treatment Records (STRs) * Explain the organization of STRs * Know how to locate x-rays, medical history forms, and other parts of STRs * Identify the entrance and separation physical examinations and annotate/bookmark them for future reference * Review STRs efficiently to establish if the claimed condition or symptoms occurred during service * Describe the Subjective Objective Assessment Plan (SOAP) format |
| Explain the following: | Each learning objective is covered in the associated topic. At the conclusion of the lesson, the learning objectives will be reviewed. |
| Motivation | The ability to review and tab/annotate Service Treatment Records is vital to the development of a veteran claim. It is important that trainees are familiar with reviewing STRS to avoid errors in processing VA benefit. |
| STAR Error code(s) | Task 2, Task 5, Task 11 |
| References  Slide 3  Handout 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/).   * [M21-1 Part III, Subpart iii, 2.A](https://vaww.compensation.pension.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ka/portal.html?encodedHash=%23!agent%2Fportal%2F554400000001034%2Farticle%2F554400000014154%2FM21-1-Part-III-Subpart-iii-Chapter-2-Section-A-General-Information-on-Service-Records), General Information on Service Records * [M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, Chapter.2.B](https://vaww.compensation.pension.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ka/portal.html?encodedHash=%23!agent%2Fportal%2F554400000001034%2Farticle%2F554400000014155%2FM21-1-Part-III-Subpart-iii-Chapter-2-Section-B-Migration-of-Service-Records-and-the-Procedures-for-Obtaining-Them), Migration of Service Records and the Procedures for Obtaining Them * [M21-1 Part IV, Subpart ii, Chapter 2.A](https://vaww.compensation.pension.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ka/portal.html?encodedHash=%23!agent%2Fportal%2F554400000001034%2Farticle%2F554400000014324%2FM21-1-Part-IV-Subpart-ii-Chapter-2-Section-A-Deciding-Claims-for-Disability-Compensation), Deciding Claims for   Disability Compensation   * [M21-1, Part III, Subpart iv, 3.A.8.d](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000015809/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-iv-Chapter-3-Section-A-Examination-Requests-Overview#8e), Requirement to Identify Relevant Evidence for the Examiner’s Review * [M21-1, Part III, Subpart iv, 3.A.8.e](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000015809/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-iv-Chapter-3-Section-A-Examination-Requests-Overview#8e), Bookmarking Documents for Examiner Review * [M21-1 Part III. Subpart iv, 3.A.8.f](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000015809/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-iv-Chapter-3-Section-A-Examination-Requests-Overview#8f), Annotating Documents for Examiner Review |
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| Topic 1: Reviewing Service Treatment Records (STRs) | |
| Introduction | This topic will allow the trainee to understand the definition of STRs |
| Time Required | 1 hour |
| OBJECTIVES/ Teaching Points | Topic objectives:   * Define Service Treatment Records * Explain the organization of STRs * Know how to locate x-rays, medical history forms, and other parts of STRs * Identify the entrance and separation physical examinations and annotate/bookmark them for future reference * Review STRs efficiently to establish that the claimed condition/symptoms did/did not occur during service * Understand the Subjective Objective Assessment Plan (SOAP) format |
| Definition  Slide 4  Handout 4 | Explain to the trainee the definition of Service Treatment Records (STRs).  STRs are the chronological records (electronic or paper) documenting the medical and/or dental care and treatment received primarily outside of a hospital (i.e. – outpatient) during service for each service member. For many years, they were referred to as Service Medical Records (SMRs). |
| Obtaining STRs  Slide 5  Handout 4 | Take a moment to explain the importance of how STRs are obtained. Note with RMC and HAIMS you will often receive the STRs before we take development action on the claim. This action is due to the Automated STR using VBMS and happens when claims are established within VBMS or a claims folder is established.  STRs are uploaded into Veteran Benefits Management System (VBMS) from:   * + National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) via Personnel Information Exchanges System (PIES)   + Records Management Center (RMC) – RMC Source Material Tracking System (SMTS) Portal   + Healthcare Artifact and Image Management Solution (HAIMS)   On January 1, 2013 individual service departments included a letter of certification of completeness of a member’s STRs. Then on June 25, 2013, DOD included a DD Form 2963, STR Certification. And by August 1, 2013, all service departments were using this form. |
| General Information found in STRs  Slide 6  Handout 4 - 5 | Physical examination reports, including reports from entrance and discharge physical examinations, if performed  Service member’s medical history  All dental examination reports and records  Clinical record cover sheets and summaries  Outpatient medical and dental treatment records  Physical profiles and medical board proceedings  Prescriptions for eyeglasses and orthopedic footwear  STRs received from a service department or records facility are considered substantially complete for records development purposes if they contain   * at least one of the documents listed in [M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.A.1.e](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014154/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-iii-Chapter-2-Section-A-General-Information-on-Service-Records#1e) for each period of qualifying service, or * the certification letter/DD Form 2963, Service Treatment Record (STR) Certification.   **Important Note**: On January 1, 2013 individual service departments included a letter of certification of completeness of a member’s STRs. Then on June 25, 2013, DoD included a DD Form 2963, STR Certification. And by August 1, 2013, all service departments were using this form. You may find it helpful to tab/annotate these two records for future reference. |

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| General Information Not Found in STRs  *Slide 7-8*  *Handout 5* | Explain to the trainees what information is not generally found in STRs   * Inpatient treatment records (clinical records) * Finance records * Mental health records, or * The Military Personnel Record Jacket (MPRJ), which may contain physical profiles and medical board proceedings   *Note*: STRs of service members, that obtain treatment at a civilian facility on their own, will not contain those medical or mental health records. These records are not associated with the military records unless referred from a military treatment facility. The records are not sent to a storage facility such as NPRC or HAIMS and usually destroyed within a defined period of inactivity (usually 5 years for mental health records). |
| Reviewing STRs  Slide 9  Handout 6 | Explain to the trainee how to properly review STRs and the importance of annotating/bookmarking STRs for examiners and RVSRs  In order to review Service Treatment Records efficiently you should:   * Review the STRs for claimed conditions or symptoms * Tab/annotate the entrance and separation physical exams in the STRs (SF 88 or DD Form 2808 depending on when the Veteran Served) * Tabbing/annotating necessary where the claimed condition was diagnosed or noted in the STRs * STRs received from HAIMS are often typed and contain a Table of Contents to make STR review easier   It is required to annotate/bookmark these records per M21-1 III.iv.3.A.8.d. |
| Enlistment and Separation Exams  *Slides 10-14*  *Handout 6* | * Discuss the basic outline of Entrance and Separation Exams While reviewing STRs you will find that the form is now changed from Form SF-88 to a DD Form 2808, depending on the period that the veteran served. These forms are very similar. * In the Separation SF 88, the purpose of examination can be found in section 16. * Purpose of examination can be found in section 15C of DD Form 2808: enlistment, separation, retirement, medical board, etc. |

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| Topic 2: Components and Variations of SOAP | | |
| INTRODUCTION | This topic will allow the trainee to understand the abbreviation SOAP | |
| TIME REQUIRED | 0.25 hours | |
| **OBJECTIVES/ Teaching Points** | Topic Objectives:   * Understand the Components and Variations of SOAP | |
| **Definition** | *Explain to the trainees the definition SOAP*.  The SOAP format is used by many medical professionals, not just military medical professionals. However, not all medical professionals use this abbreviation, and it is not unique to military personnel. | |
| SOAP  Slide 15  *Handout* 7 | Explain to the trainee how the STRs are formatted and the SOAP format  The SOAP format found in treatment records came into use by the military in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s. Generally, you would only look at the **S** and the **A** parts and not read the full note. You will also notice that many treatment records will use different abbreviations to signify each section. Some of these variations are included below:  **S** Subjective summary or history of the patient’s reason for seeking medical advice/help or symptoms experienced  **O** Objective finding by the treatment of provider during the examination  **A** Assessment (the diagnosis, or in some cases the provisional diagnosis pending further tests)  **P** Plan for treatment or medication prescribed | |
| Example of SOAP  Slide 16-18  *Handout* 7 | Review example of SOAP with trainees. | |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Practical Exercise 1 – Review of STRs and Other Medical Evidence | | | Time Required | 0.25 hours | | EXERCISE *Handout 7* | This exercise will give the VSRs the opportunity to apply to claims the knowledge gained by identifying various components of SOAP format within service treatment records  Have the trainee provide the correct SOAP component for each of the following   1. “Diagnosis: Left knee strain”   *Assessment*   1. “Patient complains of sore throat. Patient says that redness and swelling of throat causes painful swallowing. Took 2 Aleve in past 1 hour.”   *Subjective*   1. “Patient should continue back exercises to alleviate lower back pain. Patient should alternate ice & heat when pain occurs at nighttime. 800mg Motrin prescribed up to 3 x day.”   *Plan*   1. “S/P ACL reconstruction. Dry & intact. No mottling of lower leg. Toes warm to touch, no discoloration of nail beds. Full mobility of toes.”   *Objective (examiner provided only objective notations about the patient’s status post ACL surgery)*   1. “Patient says he cannot lift left arm above shoulder. (Subjective portion) Prognosis is: left shoulder rotator cuff syndrome.(Assessment portion)”   *Subjective + Assessment* | | |
| Practical Exercise 2 – Components and Variations of SOAP | |
| Time Required | 0.25 hours |
| EXERCISE | Have the trainee fill out the components of SOAP as discussed during the training. Also, list their variations usually found in Service Treatment Records (STRs)  Ask if there are any questions about the information presented in the exercise, and then proceed to the Review. |
| Practical Exercise: Components and Variation of SOAP    Handout 9 | S: Subjective  - Can also be listed as “Reason for Request,” “history of present illness,” or “Symptoms”  O: Objective  - Can also be listed as “Phsycial examination,” Consultation Report,” or “Laboratory Data”  A: Assessment  - Can also be listed as “Impression” or “Diagnosis”  P: Plan  - Can also be listed as “Treatment” or may be written beside  the assessment or diagnosis  What is the main difference between “Subjective” and “Objective” portions of a treatment report?  The subjective portion of a treatment report is defined by what the service member or Veteran is being treated for when he/she visits the treatment provider. The subjective portion is the Veteran’s description of what pain, disability, injury or event led him/her to visit the treatment provider.  The objective portion of a treatment report is the statement from the treatment provider about the state of the patient’s disability, injury or disease.  Subjective look at the condition vs. objective look at the condition |

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| Lesson Review and Wrap-up | |
| **Introduction**  Discuss the following: | The Introduction to Reviewing Service Treatment Records (STRs) is complete.  Review each lesson objective and ask the trainees for any questions or comments. |
| **Time Required** | 0.25 hours |
| **Lesson Objectives** | You have completed the Introduction to Reviewing Service Treatment Records (STRs) lesson.  The trainee should be able to:   * Define, explain, located and identify Service Treatment Records (STRs) * Understand the SOAP format and review STRs to establish that the claimed condition/symptoms did/did not occur during service |