

Monthly Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) and
Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) Conference Call Read Ahead
Compensation Service
BDD/IDES/Mil Pay Staff (212A)
December 11, 2018—2 PM ET

The Compensation Service BDD/IDES/Mil Pay Staff hosts this monthly conference call to announce updates and address issues and questions related to the BDD and IDES Programs. All Military Services Coordinators (MSCs), Disability Rating Activity Sites (DRAS), Regional Offices and other VA personnel supporting BDD and 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 [IDES Mailbox](#) and the [Pre-Discharge BDD Mailbox](#). 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 #4490385 has been created to provide training credit for the December 2018 BDD/IDES Teleconference. To receive the credit, you must sign into TMS and self-assign the course. The evaluation must be completed to receive credit for today's call.

Please sign-up for the [C&P Calendar Subscription Service](#) 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
<https://meet.RTC.VA.GOV/andrew.reese/84K5ZZFM>

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Topics for Discussion

Quality Reviews and Claims Development

There was discussion on a recent call regarding errors called on MSCs for development actions taken prior to the completion of all claims development actions, especially in IDES cases. One option discussed was adding a note in VBMS to indicate that development is not complete and specify the reason the additional development actions were not taken at the time of the initial development action. The Quality Staff stated that this is not a viable option to prevent an error from being called; however, the IDES/BDD staff continues to work with the Quality Staff on this issue and hope to have an updated process soon. In the meantime, it is recommended that MSCs complete all development actions possible at the time of the initial development action.

Incorrect Vendors for BDD/IDES Examinations

Claim processors are reminded to ensure End Product (EP) types, and claim labels have been accurately established prior to requesting Pre-Discharge examinations. These labels are most important when requesting a Separation Health Assessment (SHA) examination through EMS, since not all vendors are authorized to conduct such exams. EMS uses the claim type/labels recorded in VBMS to accurately route exam request to authorized vendors. If inaccurately labeled, the SHA exam request could be misrouted to an unauthorized vendor and cause significant delays with completing the exam.

If you have questions regarding issues with EMS routing, please send an email to the [contract exam mailbox](#).



IDES Specific Topics

Holiday Leave and Servicemember (SM) Availability during the Claims Development and Examination Phases

As we approach the holidays, MSCs should inquire about approved leave (non-emergency) during the initial interview that could interfere with the IDES process. If the participant indicates he or she has approved leave that would prevent the timely completion of exams, the MSC should return the referral to the PEBLO as an improper referral. MSCs should confirm with the PEBLO that they are aware of the upcoming leave, and see if something can be worked out (ex: SM will attend exams while on leave, etc.). Do not accept a case or submit exam requests if you know the participant will not be available to report for exams.

Please note: DoD policy allows commanders to grant leave to IDES participants for the welfare or morale of the Servicemember (SM), provided that the leave does not prevent timely completion of IDES appointments. Approved holiday leave does not necessarily constitute an improper referral; however, leave occurring within the first days of the referral, and/or periods of leave lasting over two weeks, are likely to prevent the timely completion of IDES appointments, and should be returned to the PEBLO.

IDES Mailbox (VAVBAWAS/CO/IDES (IDES.VBACO@VA.GOV))

The IDES Mailbox has received updated certs and IDES staff is unable to open emails sent using the prompted address in the “To” line. When sending an email to the IDES mailbox, do not use a previous email or address that may pop up in the “To” line. Instead of using the prompted address, find the IDES mailbox address in the global directory (VAVBAWAS/CO/IDES). You should only have to do this one time.

VA Form 21-651 and Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC)

We have received some reports that Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2)) Counselors are telling IDES participants that they need to contact their MSC and complete a VA Form 21-651 when the SM is applying for CRSC. The Compensation Service Military Retired Pay Staff has confirmed that if the IDES participant has already waived retired pay on VA Forms 21-526, 21-526C, 21-526EZ, or 21-0819, then a VA Form 21-651 is not required.

If a Veteran receives retired pay and they receive a combined rating of 50% or more, are they eligible to receive retired pay and VA compensation benefits?

Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay (CRDP) allows military retirees to receive both military retired pay and VA compensation. If a Veteran receives retired pay based on a disability, CRDP is subject to an offset in the amount by which disability retired pay exceeds retired pay based on length of service. The following exceptions apply under CRDP:

- If the Veteran has a combined disability rating of 50% or greater, and is in receipt of or otherwise entitled to receive military retired pay based on length of service, he/she should be eligible to receive CRDP benefits.



- If the Veteran is entitled to receive CRDP, he/she will receive full military retirement pay and full VA disability compensation upon receipt of an audit error worksheet from DFAS or Coast Guard.

Use of Current VA Form 21-526EZ (March 2018 Version)

A [VA Form 21-526EZ](#) (dated March 2018) has been published to the [VA Forms Website](#). A link to the updated 21-526EZ can also be found on [Compensation Service IDES Intranet Site](#). As discussed on the [September 2018](#) Conference Call, MSCs should provide only the current (March 2018 version) of the VA Form 21-526EZ to IDES and BDD claimants.

If a claimant completed an application prior to meeting with the MSC and used an earlier version of the 21-526EZ, the claim would still be acceptable (per M21-1.III.ii.1.C.8.a), and should be processed according to standard procedure. However, MSCs should encourage use of the current 21-526EZ to the extent possible, and must provide the current version to claimants.

Recent Updates to M21-1 III.i.2.D

On November 15, 2018, several updates to M21-1.III.i.2.D were made. A full list of these changes can be found here, and an abbreviated listing is below.

- Description of IDES stages of VA responsibility and related timeliness goals
- Process changes associated with use of updated VA Form 21-0819
- Examination request fields in VTA
- Use of EMS
- Updated contract exam limitations
- Clarification of when final attempt letters are required in IDES cases
- Clarification of when stressor development is required in IDES cases,
- Process for rescheduling IDES examination appointments
- Forgoing exams for referred conditions when participants fail to report *
- Timely handling (shipping/scanning) of paper documents*

These changes largely served to clarify current IDES guidance and/or to incorporate recent changes that were previously implemented and discussed on this teleconference. However, two changes (marked with an asterisk above) represent *new* guidance and are discussed in further detail below.

Forgoing Exams for Referred Conditions when Participants Fail to Report

M21-1 III.i.2.D.7.k. now indicates that an MEB may determine that the IDES process should continue *without* exams for referred conditions when a participant fails to report to VA exams without good cause. In these instances, the MSC will close the Medical Evaluation Stage in VTA and continue routine IDES processing. The MSC must obtain documented agreement from the MEB on this course of action, and ensure that the MEBs decision is captured in VTA and VBMS for DRAS awareness.

Generally, forgoing exams for referred conditions should be considered only in cases involving non-cooperative participants, who miss VA examination(s) with intention.



Important: Exams must be rescheduled (once) when the participant presents good cause for missing the appointment (in accordance with M21-1 I.1.C.3.n). M21-1 III.i.2.D.7.k is applicable only when no good cause was provided (or if the participant FTRs for the same examination a second time).

When exams for referred conditions are not completed for this reason (and the MEB decision has been documented in VBMS and/or VTA), the DRAS will decide the claim based on the evidence of record (in accordance with M21-1 I.1.C.3.m, *Effect of Non-Cooperation on the Duty to Provide an Examination or Opinion*).

Processing Paper Documents in a Timely Manner

Paper Documents provided by PEBLOs or IDES participants must be either:

- shipped to the scanning vendor along with a document control sheet—in accordance with [M21-1, Part III, Subpart i, 2.D.3.j](#))
- or scanned locally, uploaded to VBMS and returned to the participant--in accordance with [M21-1, Part III, Subpart i, 2.D.3.k](#) and [j](#).

M21-1 III.i.2.D.3.n. now requires these actions to be completed within the timeframe specified in the table below.

If the documents were provided ...	Then shipping or scanning/upload action must be completed within 5 calendar days of the ...
with PEBLO’s referral package or during the initial interview	initial interview.
after the initial interview	date the documents were received.

Note: MSCs are not permitted to scan the complete STR when the referral package is provided in paper; and STR must be available in the eFolder before exams can be requested. To minimize delays in the claim development stage, MSCs are encouraged to ensure paper STRs are shipped to the scanning vendor *immediately* following the initial interview.

Information Transfer between MSCs and PEBLOs (ARMDEC SAFE Alternatives)

ARMDEC SAFE remains unavailable for use. Compensation Service has developed instructions regarding [IDES Information Exchange between MSC and PEBLO](#) in the absence of SAFE, and these instructions are now available on the IDES homepage.

Please note that that local processes will be dependent on local PEBLOs’ access to HAIMS and JLV and their capability to upload documents to HAIMS. MSCs must coordinate with PEBLOs to determine a suitable method of exchange for each specific location.



Further, the instructions describe automatic transfer functionality between VBMS and HAIMS. However, this functionality has not yet been shown to be 100% reliable, and users may find some latency issues and incomplete transfers. As such, MSCs may need to take remedial steps when the automatic transfer fails. For example:

- If the referral documents (which were uploaded into HAIMS by the PEBLO), by the time the MSC is ready to request exams, the MSC must retrieve the missing records from JLV.
- If a PEBLO reports that contract examination results did not transfer to HAIMS, the MSC will need to provide the exam results via another means.

Note: When the automatic transfer of referral documents or examination results fail, MSCs are encouraged to notify the [IDES Mailbox](#)—this will help Compensation Service determine the nature and extent of the problem.

Finally, PEBLOs may upload all referral documents (including the 21-0819) documents into HAIMS. In these instances, the MSC will not receive any physical indication the referral was provided. As such, MSCs must use the Pending Interview Report in VTA to identify new IDES referrals (via the PEBLOs entry of the Prepared Claim Start Date).

So, to clarify, a PEBLO can upload a complete referral into HAIMS and that counts as the notification of the referral?

The PEBLO must update the Prepare Claim Start Date in VTA, which would serve as the MSC's notification.

VTA Reminders

VTA Training

There is no VTA Training in December.

BDD Specific Topics

Service Verification for BDD Claims

Claim processors are reminded that BDD claims should not be deferred for service verification as stated in [M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 6.B.2.a](#), and [M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 6.A.1.e](#). Development for service verification should only occur after the Servicemember has been released from active duty (see [M21-1, Part III, Subpart i.2.B.4.h](#)). Auto-generated letters are still being sent to BDD claimants prior to discharge in an effort to prevent delays with verifying service. If you have any questions regarding verifying service for BDD claims, please send an email to the [Pre-Discharge mailbox](#).

Disabled American Veterans (DAV) is providing Servicemembers with the draft rating prior to the Servicemember's separation and the Servicemember sometimes disagrees with the rating assigned. Does the Servicemember have appeal rights at that point?

No; appeal rights are not applicable until a rating decision is finalized after the Servicemember is released from active duty.

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 December 5, 2018.

December 5, 2018	BDD
Completed FYTD	7,538
Receipts FYTD	8,242
Pending	6,123
% Pending >125 Days	19.7%
# Pending >125 Days	1,205
Average Days Pending	76.6
Avg. Days to Complete FYTD	53.9

Source: PA&I Daily Output Reports, December 6, 2018

From the Pre-Discharge BDD Mailbox

Question: Since Rating Specialist are granting benefits for BDD claims based on the day after discharge, should the anticipated RAD be on the code sheet?

Answer: The anticipated RAD+1 should be on the code sheet. The only time the rating should be returned to the RVSR is if the RAD changes for a Servicemember still meeting the criteria for BDD.

Can you please clarify when the anticipated RAD should be on the code sheet?

In-Service draft rating decisions should display RAD+1 on the code sheet. In-service rating decisions will generate in VBMS-R without the RAD date in Participant Profile; however, the effective date (anticipated RAD+1) will be entered in VBMS-R. Prior to the award being generated in VBMS-A, Participant Profile must be updated with the accurate RAD date because awards cannot be generated and authorized until service has been verified. The rating decision does not need to be sent back to a RVSR for correction or update unless the effective dates have changed.

Open Floor

The IDES special issue is no longer available in VBMS. Should MSCs select the IDES Deferral special issue now?

The IDES special issue was removed from M21-4, Appendix C on November 1, 2018 and subsequently deactivated in VBMS. MSCs are not required to add an IDES special issue to contentions for IDES claims in VBMS; however, MSCs are required to enter all applicable special issues in accordance with [M21-1, III.iii.1.F.2](#). The use of the IDES Deferral special issue is pending official guidance and will be for DRAS use only.

Please note, the IDES Participant corporate flash must still be applied to all IDES claims in accordance with [M21-1, III.i.2.D.3.d](#) and remain on the corporate record ([M21-1, III.i.2.E.4.e](#)).



A tracked item for SHA, General Medical and Medical Opinion requests are not automatically generated in VBMS for contract exams since the exam request is tracked at the contention level using the exam management system (EMS). Is the MSC required to add a tracked item for SHA, General Medical and Medical Opinion requests?

No; if a SHA, General Medical or Medical Opinion request is submitted to a contractor using EMS, then the MSC is not required to create a separate tracked item for each exam requested. Contract examination scheduling requests prepared in VBMS, once accepted by the scheduling activity, will automatically generate corresponding tracked items that initially reflect 30-day suspense dates, and automatically update based on scheduling, modification, cancellation, and/or completion of individual examination appointment(s). MSCs are responsible for ensuring all requested exams are completed prior to entering the *Medical Evaluation End Date* in VTA.

MSCs are reminded that for all examination requests submitted to VHA, MSCs must add a tracked item to VBMS under the pending EP 689 for each type of examination they request outside the VBMS examination management environment ([M21-1, III.i.2.D.6.j](#)).

How long does it take for the scanning vendor to upload documents sent for scanning? I've noticed it's been taking a long time for my documents to get uploaded into the eFolder.

On December 11, 2018, the average turnaround time for the scanning vendor to upload documents into the eFolder upon receipt of documents sent using a document control sheet (DCS) and record management number (RMN) was 3.48 days. MSCs are reminded to follow the guidance below for shipping paper documents to the scanning vendor to ensure timely scanning of paper documents:

- IDES: [M21-1, III.i.2.D.3.j](#), and
- BDD: [M21-1, III.i.2.B.2.b](#).

Are MSCs required to submit an exam request for every contention, even if the contention falls under the SHA? Example: The Servicemember is claiming a knee condition; however, that condition falls under the SHA request.

MSCs should not request exams for conditions that fall under the SHA; however, they must request specialist examinations under the circumstances described in [M21-1, III.iv.3.A.6](#).

Are MSCs required to update evidence received in the Manage Evidence screen in VBMS?

Yes. All evidence received that does not correspond to a pending tracked item must be accurately recorded with the proper receipt date using the Manage Evidence screen in VBMS, or the EVIDENCE tab in MAP-D in accordance with [M21-1, III.ii.1.B.2.h](#).

The BDD segmented lane is no longer available in VBMS.

Segmented lanes are controlled locally at the RO. Please contact your supervisor if you no longer have the option to select the BDD segmented lane. Your supervisor can work with your RO leadership to set the segmented lanes available for use at your RO.

Is there a delay from when QTC delivers the exams and the upload in HAIMS/ JLV for DOD to obtain SHA?



There may be some instances of latency and/or incomplete transfers. If the PEBLO notifies the MSC that contract exam results were not successfully transferred to HAIMS, the MSC must provide the missing exam results via an approved alternative means of transfer.

Next Teleconference

The next call is scheduled for Tuesday, January 8, 2019 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, December 27, 2018.

