VA Appeals Modernization Act   
Appeals Modernization Mail Routing

Instructor Lesson Plan

Time Required: 1 Hour

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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 # | 4492331 |
| Prerequisites | N/A |
| target audience | The target audience for ***VA Appeals Modernization Act  Appeals Modernization Mail Routing***is **Veterans Service Center (VSC) Claims Assistants**.  Although this lesson is targeted to teach the VSC CA employee, it may be taught to other VA personnel as mandatory or refresher type training. |
| Time Required | 1 hour |
| Materials/ TRAINING AIDS | Lesson materials:   * ***VA Appeals Modernization Act  Appeals Modernization Mail Routing*** PowerPoint Presentation * ***VA Appeals Modernization Act  Appeals Modernization Mail Routing*** – VSC Job Aid |
| 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 * 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 |
| 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 flip charts, 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 flip chart and the associated markers are available. * The instructor completes a roll call attendance sheet or provides a sign-in sheet to the students. The attendance records are forwarded to the Regional Office Training Managers. |

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| Introduction to VA Appeals Modernization Act  Appeals Modernization Mail Routing | | |
| 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 instruct VSC Claims Assistants how to properly route appeals related mail. This lesson will contain discussions and exercises that will allow you to gain a better understanding of:   * The Appeals Modernization Decision Review process * Mail routing procedures for VA Form 20-0995 and VA Form 20-0996 * Handling Decision Review requests submitted by an alternative means |
| Lesson Objectives  Discuss the following:  Slide 2 | In order to accomplish the purpose of this lesson, the CA will be required to accomplish the following lesson objectives.  TheCAwill be able to:   * Become familiarized with the appeals modernization Decision Review process * Recognize VA Forms 20-0995 and 20-0996 * Understand routing requirements for Decision Review requests * Demonstrate mail routing procedures for Decision Review documentation | |
| 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 | **It is important to know how to route appeals related mail so that it is timely processed by the appropriate VA personnel.** | |
| STAR Error code(s) | N/A | |
| References  Slide 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/).   * **Public Law 115-55, Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017** * **38 CFR 3.2500 *Review of Decisions*** * **M21-1 III.ii.1.E.5.c. *Processing CM Packages*** * **M21-1 III.ii.2.B. *Claims for Disability Compensation and/or Pension, and Claims for Survivors Benefits*** * **M21-1 III.ii.2.C.6. *Request for Application*** * **M21-1 III.iv.2.B.3. *Readjudicating a Previously Decided Claim*** * **CM Portal Superuser and Basic User Manuals** | |

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| Topic 1: Appeals Modernization Act (AMA) Decision Review Overview | |
| Introduction | This topic will allow the CA to be able to understand the AMA Decision Review process. |
| Time Required | 0.25 hours |
| OBJECTIVES/ Teaching Points | Topic objectives:   * Explain the different Decision Review processing lanes * Explain Decision Review Operations Center (DROC) jurisdiction * Recognize end product (EP) control for Decision Review requests * Identify the prescribed forms for each type of Decision Review |
| VBA Workload Distribution  Slide 4 | VBA will distribute AMA supplemental claims and legacy appeals to ROs for processing based on policy guidance outlined in ***VBA Letter 20-18-05****.*  VBA established new **Decision Review Operations Centers (DROCs)** to process AMA Higher-Level Reviews (HLRs) and Board decisions.  Regional Office (RO) Veterans Service Centers (VSC) will process New Process Supplemental and RO Appeals Teams will work legacy appeals and full grants as well as RAMP HLR.  The Seattle and St. Petersburg DROCs are responsible for New Process Higher-Level Reviews, New Process Remands, New Process Full Grants, and New Process HLR Returns. The D.C. DROC will work legacy remands. |
| Decision Review Operations Center (DROC)  *Slide 5* | All appeals-related mail will be routed to a DROC for intake processing. Appeals mail packets will be automatically routed by the Appeals Management Office (AMO) and evenly distributed between the SeaTac, Washington and St. Petersburg, Florida DROCs using Centralize Mail (CM) portal routing rules. The CM portal will have automated routing rules for mail packets that contain any of the Decision Review request forms – these mail packets will be evenly distributed between the SeaTac DROC and the St. Petersburg DROC. DROC jurisdiction is based on workflow, not geographic location of the claimant.  However, some mail may inevitably “slip through the cracks” and be routed to the VSC CM portal queues instead. |
| End Product (EP) Controls  Slide 6 | Legacy appeals have been using the end product (EP) 170 series to control appeals that are in Notice of Disagreement or Form 9 status. However, the Appeals Modernization Act (AMA) has created a new EP system to control the new types of Decision Review requests.  Intake personnel at the DROCs will use a new system called **Caseflow Intake** to establish AMA Supplemental Claims and Higher-Level Reviews within VBMS.  EP 030 will be used to track Board Grants and Higher-Level Review decisions. EP 040 will be used to track Supplemental Claim requests based on new and relevant evidence as well as Duty to Assist (DTA) errors. Explain that there are separate claim labels to reflect whether the issues being reviewed are rating activity or non-rating activity jurisdiction or are Pension Management Center (PMC) related. |
| Decision Review Forms  Slides 7-9 | The AMA Decision Review process retires VA Form 4107, *Your Rights to Appeal our Decision* and VA Form 21-0958, *Notice of Disagreement*. Now each Decision Review process has it’s own prescribed form, the only exception being a CUE.  Supplemental Claims, which may be submitted at any time after a decision has been made on a given issue, must be submitted using VA Form 20-0995, *Decision Review Request: Supplemental Claim*. Supplemental claims will be processed at VSC of jurisdiction.  A request for a Higher-Level Review must be submitted using VA Form 20-0996, *Decision Review Request: Higher-Level Review* and received within one year of the notice of the decision being reviewed. Higher-Level Reviews may be processed at the DROC of jurisdiction. If a claimant believes there was an error made in a prior decision and does not wish to submit any additional evidence, they may submit a Decision Review Request for Higher-Level Review.  A request for a Board Appeal must also be received within one year of the notice of the decision being reviewed and must be submitted using VA Form 10182, *Decision Review Request: Board Appeal*. Board Appeals will be processed by the BVA.  Explain that VA will not process the VA Form 10182 as these forms should be routed directly to the Board of Veterans’ Appeals.  CUEs do not require a prescribed form, however they must be submitted in writing and bare the claimant’s signature, or that of their designated representative.  ***Note:*** Requests based on Clear and Unmistakable Error (CUE) do not fall under AMA and will continue to be processed as normal by the VSC. Do NOT route CUE allegations to a DROC for intake processing.  Review the VA Form 20-0995, *Decision Review Request: Supplemental Claim* with the trainees (Slide 8). Point out Part II is where the claimant must list the issue(s) they want to be part of their supplemental claim. Part III discusses the importance of New and Relevant Evidence (historically called new and material evidence). Make note of any issue that is being withdrawn from the legacy appeals process.  Next, review VA Form 20-0996, *Decision Review Request: Higher-Level Review* with the trainees (Slide 9). Discuss how Part II has the Higher-Level Review Options, including how a claimant can request a Higher-Level Review conducted a the same office within the agency of original jurisdiction, Question 13. Part III should be reviewed for the issues that are related to the Higher-Level Review and also for any issue that is being withdrawn from the legacy appeals process.  Stress that it is important to familiarize themselves with these two forms so they can properly identify and route them accordingly. Refer CAs to the **Appeals Modernization Mail Routing – VSC Job Aid** for instructions on routing these forms. |

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| Topic 2: Mail Routing Procedures for Appeals-Related Mail | |
| Introduction | This topic will allow the CA to be able to understand how to route appeals-related mail to the appropriate AMA processing lane. |
| Time Required | 0.25 hours |
| OBJECTIVES/ Teaching Points | Topic objectives:   * Demonstrate how to route mail packets in Centralized Mail Portal * Determine the DROC of jurisdiction for mail routing purposes   Recognize Decision Review requests not submitted on the prescribed form |
| AMA Mail Packets  Slide 10 | All Decision Review related mail should be automatically routed to the DROC of jurisdiction – however some forms or documents may inevitably be overlooked and incorrectly assigned to a VSC CA for intake processing.  Instruct the CAs that when reviewing mail in the CM portal, if they are assigned a mail packet containing VA Form 20-0995 or 20-0996 or other AMA Decision Review documentation, they must transfer the mail packet to a DROC CM queue for intake processing. This includes requests for a Decision Review not submitted on the prescribed form. For example, previously denied issues listed on VA Form 21-526EZ or requests submitted through a call center or in writing.  Advise CAs that they may choose either DROC when transferring mail packets – there is no preference as to which DROC will process which mail packet, etc.  If a VSC CA sees a mail packet containing only VA Form 10182, *Decision Review Request: Board Appeal,* they must forward the mail packet to the Board of Veterans’ Appeals mail portal.  Advise VSC CAs not to establish appeals EPs or upload the documents to VBMS.  Also advise CAs not to confuse VA Form 20-0996, *Decision Review: Higher-Level Review* with VA Form 21-0966, *Intent to File*, which have similar form numbers. |
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| Transferring CM Mail Packets  *Slide 11* | The CM portal user must send a mail packet to the Reassign Queue, where the Super User may route the mail packet to a DROC mail queue for intake processing.  In the CM work queue Results Grid, the user must select the mail packet they wish to route to a DROC and the Packet Actions Task Bar will appear above the grid. The user must then click the “Re-Assign” button in the actions task bar to move the mail packet to the Reassign queue.  The CM portal Super User will navigate to the Reassign queue, select the mail packet, then click the “Re-Assign” action button in the task bar and select either the SeaTac or St. Petersburg DROC mail queue from the drop-down list. |
| Questions?  *Slide 12* | Ask the CAs if they have any questions or need clarification on anything discussed during the lesson. |

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| Lesson Review, Assessment, and Wrap-up | |
| Introduction  Discuss the following: | The Appeals Modernization Mail Routing lesson 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 Appeals Modernization Mail Routing lesson.  The trainee should be able to:   * Become familiarized with the appeals modernization Decision Review process * Recognize VA Forms 20-0995 and 20-0996 * Understand routing requirements for Decision Review requests * Demonstrate mail routing procedures for Decision Review documentation |