**Ready to Rate Refresher/Review for Philadelphia VSRs**

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**November 2019**

***INITIAL REVIEW OF CLAIM***

1. Verify that you have a valid claim:
   1. proper form for benefit sought
      * 1. M21-1 III.ii.2.B.1.b.
   2. current revision of form (or one of the exceptions for accepting an outdated form)
      * 1. M21-1 III.ii.1.C.8.a.– e.
        2. Several forms recently expired – be vigilant
   3. valid signature
      * 1. M21-1 III.ii.2.B.2.e.
        2. M21-1 III.ii.1.C.2.a.– k.
   4. alternate signature
      * 1. M21-1 III.ii.1.C.3.a.– e.
   5. valid claimant (dependent established; NW and income complete)
2. Verify military service and correctly update VBMS (no overlapping periods)
   1. M21-1 III.ii.3.C.7.a.
3. Open all documents received with claim, read through and determine if claimant is identifying any additional benefits sought, special issues, or additional evidence
   1. M21-1 III.ii.4.H.1.a.
   2. M21-1 I.1.B.1.f.
4. For pension claims, VSR must ensure all development is complete before making the case RFD and sending to the rating activity (dependency is established, income, expenses, net worth, AO73)
   1. M21-1 III.ii.7.1.a.
   2. M21-1 V.i.1.1.d.
   3. M21-1 V.i.2.1.a. – b.
   4. M21-1 V.i.2.5.a.
   5. M21-1 V.i.3.A.1.a. and f.

***DIC/SC BURIAL CLAIMS REVIEW***

1. Review veteran’s file to determine if service connection was established for any conditions
   1. 38 CFR 3.312
2. Locate the death certificate, tab and annotate cause of death. Case cannot be made ready for decision without a death certificate including cause and manner of death. You can also use the document properties/notes feature.
3. If any of the causes of death (primary or contributory) are conditions for which service connection had been established during the veteran’s lifetime, annotate and send to the rating board.
   1. M21.1.IV.ii.1.l.3.a. - f.
4. If the veteran was NOT service connected for any of the causes of death, VSR must review the file for STRs and OMPF – tab and annotate if more than one period of service.
   1. If all records for all periods of service are not in file, complete PIES 050, or DPRIS request when applicable, for all periods of service.
   2. M21-1 IV.iii.2.A.1.h.
   3. M21-1 III.iii.2.I.
5. SC burial development is needed when VA Forms 21-534EZ and 21-530 are received and we cannot grant
   1. M21-1 I.1.B.1.a. and e.
   2. Also watch for VAF 21-534 NON-EZ form – that will need full 5103

***DEVELOPMENT FOR MEDICAL RECORDS***

1. It is the VSR’s responsibility to obtain CAPRI records prior to making ready for decision
   1. M21-1 III.iii.1.C.2.a. – m. (Obtaining VA Medical Records)
   2. M21-1.I.1.C.4.a. – f. (Determining Relevance of Records)
2. Follow the procedures for obtaining private treatment reports
   1. M21-1 I.1.C.2.a. – d.
3. Please note that if DOMA returns the records request for missing information or additional information needed to process (e.g. death cert) the VSR must follow procedures in the manual – it is not RFD until all procedures are complete
   1. M21-1.III.iii.1.D.2.h.

***SPECIAL ISSUES – RVN/AGENT ORANGE EXPOSURE***

1. If RVN is contended, VSR must review the evidence of record to include DD214 or discharge document, STRs, OMPF

a. If these items are not of record, submit PIES 050 or DPRIS as applicable; VSR must open and review these materials upon receipt

* 1. M21-1 IV.ii.1.H.1.a. – n.

1. If RVN can be conceded, VSR must tab and annotate the document including page number if applicable

a M21-1 IV.ii.1.H.1.k.

1. If RVN is found and tabbed and the cause of death is an AO presumptive condition, tab and annotate the death certificate accordingly and send to rating activity
2. 38 CFR 3.309 (e)
3. If RVN is found and tabbed and the cause of death is NOT an AO presumptive condition, VSR must send development for non-presumptive conditions
   1. M21-1 IV.ii.1.H.1.f.
4. If RVN is NOT found and cause of death is an AO presumptive condition, VSR must send development for AO exposure
   1. M21-1 IV.ii.1.H.1.f.
5. If RVN is NOT found and cause of death is NOT an AO presumptive condition, VSR must send development for AO exposure and AO non-presumptive
   1. M21-1 IV.ii.1.H.1.f.

***SPECIAL ISSUES – ASBESTOS EXPOSURE***

1. If asbestos exposure is contended as contributory to the cause of death, locate and review the cause of death on the death certificate – tab and annotate cause of death.
   1. M21-1 IV.ii.1.l.3.a. – f.
2. VSR must complete asbestos development.
   1. M21-1 IV.ii.1.l.3.a. – f.

***SPECIAL ISSUES – RADIATION EXPOSURE***

1. If claimant contends that exposure to radiation contributed to the veteran’s death, locate and review the cause of death on the death certificate – tab and annotate cause of death.
2. VSR should review the causes of death and determine if any are subject to presumptive service connection for radiogenic diseases, and if so, annotate accordingly and follow procedures for transferring claim for centralized processing.
   1. M21-1 IV.ii.1.B.2.a. – g.
   2. 38 CFR 3.309(d)
3. VSR should review the causes of death and determine if any are subject to presumptive service connection for ionizing radiation exposure
   1. M21-1 IV.ii.1.C.2.a. – g.
   2. 38 CFR 3.311
   3. 38 CFR 3.309(d)
4. If cause of death is NOT a recognized radiogenic condition, VSR must conduct development for radiation.
   1. M21-1 IV.ii.1.B.2.a. – g.
   2. M21-1 IV.ii.1.C.2.a. – g.

***SPECIAL ISSUES – CAMP LEJEUNE***

1. If claimant contends that the veteran’s death was due to exposure to contaminated water in Camp Lejeune, locate and review the cause of death on the death certificate – tab and annotate the cause of death
   1. M21-1 IV.ii.l.6.e.
2. Following the Camp Lejeune jurisdiction guidelines
   1. M21-1 IV.ii.1.I.6.c.
3. VSR will need to review the veteran’s military records to determine if the requisite CL service is shown. If of record, VSR must tab and annotate the evidence found, including page number if applicable.
   1. M21-1 IV.ii.l.6.e.