Monthly Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) and

Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) Conference Call Read Ahead

Compensation Service

BDD/IDES/Mil Pay Staff (212A)

March 10, 2020—2 PM ET

The Compensation Service BDD/IDES/Mil Pay Staff hosts this call to announce updates and address issues and questions related to the BDD/IDES Programs. All Military Services Coordinators (MSCs), Disability Rating Activity Sites (DRAS), Regional Offices and other VA personnel supporting BDD/IDES are invited to participate.

This read-ahead is provided to facilitate discussion during the conference call.

**Change to Call Notes:** The Call Notes from the previous month’s call will be an appendix to the current month’s Read Ahead (there is no longer a separate Call Notes document). The Call Notes for the February Call are in this Read Ahead. The TMS # for this month’s call will be provided during the call should be active with-in a week of the call’s completion. A Calendar Blast will notify the field when the TMS # is active.

Please sign–up for the [C&P Calendar Subscription Service](http://vbacodmoint1.vba.va.gov/bl/21/calendar/cal_Subscribe.asp) to receive notification that the read-ahead is available and for notification when the TMS number is active.

**Call-in Information and New Guidance**

Call in info:

[Join Skype Meeting](https://meet.RTC.VA.GOV/andrew.reese/JDC6LJZ6)

844-358-7954, 844-210-0201 or 844-894-0415. Code is 496808907#.

The IM/Chat session will be disabled during the call. Ask questions over the phone during the call or send an email to the appropriate staff corporate mailbox.

When the presenter mutes the audience for questions, follow the guidance below to unmute yourself:

1. If you are dialed in through your computer (select Use Skype for Business when signing into Skype), you must find your name in the attendee list and unmute yourself by right clicking the microphone.
2. If you are dialed in through a phone (select “Call me at” or “Don’t Join Audio” when signing into Skype), unmute yourself using \*6.
3. Do not unmute yourself if you do not need to speak.

General Topics for Discussion

Gulf War (GW) Examinations in Pre-Discharge Cases

MSCs are reminded of the procedures for handling IDES/BDD claims related to GW Environmental Hazards. These procedures are outlined in [M21-1 III.i.2.D.6.](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000033257/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-i-Chapter-2-Section-D-Overview-of-the-Integrated-Disability-Evaluation-System-IDES-and-Initial-Claims-Development?articleViewContext=article_view_browse_tree&isFeatured=undefined&topic=undefined)c. and [M21-1 III.i.2.B.2.b](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014101/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-i-Chapter-2-Section-B-Division-of-Responsibilities-for-Processing-Benefits-Delivery-at-Discharge-BDD-and-BDD-Excluded-Claims#2) and are summarized below.

When IDES/BDD exams involve claims specifically based on **[38 CFR 3.317](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/retrieveECFR?gp=1&SID=f229d024585f9c6198819439ad4a0419&ty=HTML&h=L&r=SECTION&n=se38.1.3_1317)**, the MSC must: request the SHA DBQ, and include the *GW Notice to Examiners* within the request.

* CAPRI users must copy and paste the *GW Notice* into the remarks of the request;
* EMS users must use *Specialty Language Needed?* Field under the applicable contention and select, “general medical gulf war opinion;” this selection will populate the required language into the request.

In these instances, MSCs must **NOT:**

* request a GW General Medical DBQ (This would be duplicative of the SHA DBQ, which also includes a full general medical exam).
* request a Medical Opinion DBQ

***Important:*** these special GW exam requirements are only necessary in claims specifically based on [38 CFR 3.317](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/retrieveECFR?gp=1&SID=f229d024585f9c6198819439ad4a0419&ty=HTML&h=L&r=SECTION&n=se38.1.3_1317)**.** These procedures are not necessarily required simply because a claimant or an application indicates service in Southwest Asia, or exposure to environmental hazards. Further, GW examination protocols are typically not necessary in cases involving diagnosed chronic conditions, that are subject to service connection on a direct basis. If MSCs are unsure of whether a claim is related to [38 CFR 3.317](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/retrieveECFR?gp=1&SID=f229d024585f9c6198819439ad4a0419&ty=HTML&h=L&r=SECTION&n=se38.1.3_1317), and requires GW exam protocols, please contact the IDES Mailbox for guidance.

**Use of Telehealth/Tele-mental Health C&P Exams in BDD/IDES**

[M21-1 III.iv.3.A.4.b](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?query=ACE#4b) stipulates that Acceptable Clinical Evidence (ACE) process is not allowable in IDES/BDD exams. IDES and BDD exam requests must indicate that ACE exams cannot be used.

However, an important distinction must be made between the ACE process and *telehealth* and/or *tele-mental health* C&P exams. Although the ACE process is prohibited in BDD/IDES, an exam provider may complete one or more of the requested examinations using telehealth technology, provided that the exams are completed under the specifications outlined under VHA telehealth protocol. Exams completed in this manner are effectively considered in-person or face to face exams and as such, are acceptable in BDD and IDES cases.

IDES Specific Topics

**Proposed Ratings Provided Only by PEBLO**

[M21-1 III.i.2.E.3.m.](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000046269/M21-1%2C-Part-III%2C-Subpart-i%2C-Chapter-2%2C-Section-E---Department-of-Veterans-Affairs-%28VA%29-Responsibilities-Based-on-Medical-Evaluation-Board-%28MEB%29-and-Physical-Evaluation-Board-%28PEB%29-Outcomes) describes the process for distribution of the Proposed Rating Decision and stipulates that only the PEBLO can provide a Proposed Rating to an IDES participant. MSC’s and DRAS personnel must not release Proposed Ratings decisions to IDES participant’s directly.

Recent reports have indicated increasing instances in which an IDES participant has been provided Proposed Ratings before meeting with their PEBLO to discuss the PEB findings. This has resulted in complications involving participants seeking reconsiderations of VA evaluations prior to the conclusion of the IPEB.

The increase in these situations may be related to recent Parallel Processing (PP) efforts at the DRAS in which DRAS may be taking rating action in advance of the PEB’s request. Although the Proposed Ratings may be complete and available in the eFolder earlier, PP makes no change to when or how these documents should be provided to the participant.

There has been some indication that National Call Center (NCC) Representatives, may be providing Proposed Rating in response to telephone inquiries. Compensation Service will engage the NCC with a reminder of proper procedures regarding IDES Proposed Ratings. In the meantime, DRAS personnel and MSCs must continue to adhere to existing restrictions regarding the release of Proposed Ratings.

**Military Sexual Trauma (MST) in Non-Active Duty (NAD) IDES Cases**

MSCs are reminded that generally, no stressor development or special handling of MST claims involving IDES participants who are currently serving on active duty. However, in any case from a NAD IDES participant involving MST, MSCs must notify the DRAS per [M21-1 III.i.2.D.4.c.](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000033257/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-i-Chapter-2-Section-D-Overview-of-the-Integrated-Disability-Evaluation-System-IDES-and-Initial-Claims-Development?articleViewContext=article_view_browse_tree&isFeatured=undefined&topic=undefined)

MSCs must notify the DRAS via the DRAS mailboxes indicated in [M21-1 III.i.2.D.1.g.](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000033257/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-i-Chapter-2-Section-D-Overview-of-the-Integrated-Disability-Evaluation-System-IDES-and-Initial-Claims-Development?articleViewContext=article_view_browse_tree&isFeatured=undefined&topic=undefined) The MST Outreach Coordinator at the DRAS is responsible for taking the actions outlined in [M21-1 IV.ii.1.D.5.d and f.](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014906/M21-1%2C-Part-IV%2C-Subpart-ii%2C-Chapter-1%2C-Section-D---Claims-for-Service-Connection-%28SC%29-for-Post-Traumatic-Stress-Disorder-%28PTSD%29)

It is critical that MSCs notify the DRAS immediately following the initial interview in NAD MST cases, so that the MST coordinator can complete the necessary actions. When the MSC fails to notify the DRAS in these instances, the required MST coordinator actions must be completed later during the IDES process and can potentially delay IDES ratings and/or delivery of Veterans’ benefits.

**Timely Update of Medical Evaluation End Date**

MSC must make every effort to update the *Medical Evaluation End Date* (MEED) in VTA on the same day examination results are provided to the PEBLO. Timely entry of this data point is now critically important due to recent DRAS process changes associated with Parallel Processing (PP).

PP allows the DRAS to begin rating activity immediately following completion of VA Exams; and in these cases, it is the MSC entry of the MEED that signals to the DRAS that the case has become actionable. When the MEED is not entered on the date that the results are provided to the PEBLO, it reduces the additional time for rating that PP was designed to provide.

Compensation Service recently completed analysis of MEED data in VTA to determine the impact/extent of late data entry. The analysis found that the majority of MSCs consistently update the MEED on the date the exam results were provided to the PEBLO. However, several MSCs routinely back date the MEED. Back dated MEEDs were found in over 10% of IDES cases; and in 7% of cases, 3 or more days passed before the MSC updated the MEED. Compensation Service will continue to monitor the MEED data and will take action to engage management at stations in which MSCs continue to repeatedly back-date the MEED.

All MSCs are asked to review their current work processes, and to ensure that VTA is being updated on the same day exam results are provided to the PEBLO.

**IDES Quality Reviews Completed by DRAS**

As of January 2020, quality reviews of MSCs IDES work (actions taken on cases controlled by EP 689s) will be routed only to the Providence and Seattle DRAS for review. As DRAS employees, the Providence and Seattle AQRS generally have a practical understanding of IDES-specific requirements, which is expected to result in more effective quality reviews. Specifically, this change is expected to provide MSCs with more useful feedback and reduce the number of challenged/rebutted errors called in IDES cases. This change will also allow closer communication and coordination between the IDES team at Compensation Service and the AQRSs completing IDES reviews.

Current IDES 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 (ADC) for February 2020.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **February 2020** | **IDES Goal (AD/NAD)** | **IDES (AD/NAD)** |
| **Claim Dev**  | **5/11** | **8/10** |
| **Medical Stage** | **32** | **40/38** |
| **Proposed Ratings** | **20** | **19/37** |
| **Recon Ratings**  | **4** | **14/12** |
| **Exit Interviews** | **14** | **8/9** |
| **Final Ratings** | **20/na** | **29/na** |

 **Source:** VTA Completed Reports March 5, 2020 (7am ET).

 **Note:** VA is using the goals from the 230-day process.

BDD Specific Topics

Brokering BDD Claims

There have been reports of BDD claims held for 10 or more days and then brokered to other ROs due to the Servicemember living in the same state as the RO. Per [M21-1, III.i.2.B.2.b](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014101/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-i-Chapter-2-Section-B-Division-of-Responsibilities-for-Processing-Benefits-Delivery-at-Discharge-BDD-and-BDD-Excluded-Claims#2), all BDD claims received at an intake site must be developed by that intake site.

**Transferring BDD Claims to Centralized Mail**

There have been reports in the past of BDD claims being shipped to Centralized Mail (CM). If you are receiving BDD claims from other ROs via the CM portal without development, return these claims to the SOO/intake site and include the guidance from [M21-1, III.i.2.B.2.b](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014101/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-i-Chapter-2-Section-B-Division-of-Responsibilities-for-Processing-Benefits-Delivery-at-Discharge-BDD-and-BDD-Excluded-Claims#2) showing all BDD claims received at an intake site must be developed by that intake site. The SOO/intake site is responsible for the development and scanning of any incoming BDD claims. Per [M21-1, III.i.2.B.2.b (Step 5)](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014101/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-i-Chapter-2-Section-B-Division-of-Responsibilities-for-Processing-Benefits-Delivery-at-Discharge-BDD-and-BDD-Excluded-Claims#2), BDD claims documents are forwarded for VCIP scanning or scan the documents locally. BDD claims documents must not be shipped to CM.

**Increasing Participation in the BDD Program**

The BDD program has proven to be the fastest way to receive VA Benefits for transitioning Servicemembers; however, with an estimated 200k Servicemembers transitioning annually, the program has been severely underutilized. In FY2019, we received a total of 35k BDD claims, which only represents 18% of the estimated transitioning population. Unfortunately, the BDD claim receipts as of today have not increased much compared to FY2019.

Communication with the VACO Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Office, combined with a recent visit to the San Diego RO intake sites highlighted some of the possible reasons for the lack of participation. The most common reason was that Servicemembers were unaware of the eligibility timeframe (180-90 days prior to discharge) to file their claim. We are asking every RO and intake site to please reiterate the eligibility criteria (with an emphasis on the eligible timeframe) to transitioning Servicemembers at your location. Your efforts will ensure otherwise eligible Servicemembers are not excluded due to filing their claim outside of the eligibility timeframe.

BDD EPs and Claim Labels

There have been several instances of BDD and BDD-excluded claims establishment errors. As a reminder, as directed in [M21-1, III.i.2.A.2.c](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014099/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-i-Chapter-2-Section-A-General-Information-on-Pre-Discharge-Claims#2a), all BDD claims must be established with a diary EP 336 with a *BDD* claim label. The date of claim will be the day after the anticipated discharge date (RAD + 1).

After the examinations have been requested and if no other development is required, the EP 336 must be changed to the appropriate rating EP and BDD claim label as shown in [M21-1, III.i.2.A.2.d](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014099/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-i-Chapter-2-Section-A-General-Information-on-Pre-Discharge-Claims#2a) and below.

| **Claim Type** | **BDD EP - Claim Label** |
| --- | --- |
| original | * *110 - BDD-Initial*, or
* *010 - BDD-Initial 8+ issues*
 |
| * new SC
* reopened, or
* increased evaluation
 | *020 - BDD-Supplemental* |

If a claim is already pending and another claim is submitted electronically, then the system will establish one of the below EP 400s.

* *400 - eBenefits 526EZ-Pre-Discharge (400)*, and
* *400 - D2D-Pre-Discharge (400).*

There is a list of [BDD EPs and Claim Labels/Tableau Claim Label Codes](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/VBADOD/docs/predischarge/BDDEPClaimLabels.xlsx) on the [Pre-Discharge Intranet site](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/vbadod/predischarge.asp) which includes D2D, SEP, and eBenefits claim labels and the corresponding Tableau claim label code found in Tableau generated reports. While some of the attached claim labels may have been discontinued, this list can be used as a reference to identify all BDD claims routed to your RO including any outliers when running Tableau reports.

As a reminder, all BDD-Excluded claims must be established with an EP 010, 110, or 020 as appropriate to the claim type (original <8 issues, original 8+ issues, new, increase, or reopen) per [M21-1, III.i.2.A.2.h](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014099/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-i-Chapter-2-Section-A-General-Information-on-Pre-Discharge-Claims#2a). Then, attach an appropriate non-BDD claim label. For example, an original BDD-Excluded claim with eight or more issues would be established as a diary EP 010 with an *Initial Compensation 8+ Issues* claim label.

Current BDD 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 March 5, 2020.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **March 5, 2020** | **Goal** | **Data** |
| **Completed FYTD** |  | **14,788** |
| **Receipts FYTD** |  | **13,064** |
| **Pending** |  | **3,064** |
| **# Completed w/in 30 Days of Discharge** |  | **9,282** |
| **% Completed w/in 30 Days of Discharge** | **100%** | **63%** |
| **Avg. Days to Complete FYTD** | **30** | **43.3** |

**Source:** Tableau BDD History Report, March 6, 2020

Next Teleconferences

The next BDD/IDES Call is scheduled for Tuesday, April 14, 2020 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 close of business (COB), Wednesday April 1 (no fooling), 2020.

The next BDD/IDES Coaches Call is scheduled for June 4, 2020. 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 close of business (COB), Friday May 22, 2020.

Open Floor

**Appendix 1:** **Call Notes from the February 2020 Comp Service BDD/IDES Conference Call**

The following notes provide a summary of questions and discussion from the February BDD/IDES Conference Call. For a complete description of the topics discussed on the call please review the [February Read Ahead](https://vaww.infoshare.va.gov/sites/212Procedures/212D/VDPO%20Monthly%20IDES%20Call/2020/Feb%202020/Feb2020BDDIDESCallReadAhead.docx).

**MDEPO Briefing**

The Medical Disability Exam Program Office (MDEPO) provided a briefing on the use of EMS, the Exam Portal, ExamTrac and the District 6 Contract. During the MDEPO briefing, there was some discussion of Gulf War Examinations in Pre-Discharge Cases. A summary and clarification of the Gulf War discussion is included in this Read Ahead.

**STRs Requirements for BDD Claims/Exams**

During the February Conference Call, there was some indication that, except when a medical opinion is needed, BDD examinations can be requested *before* the STRs were in the eFolder. **Please Note:** STRs for the current period of service must be provided for a claim to meet BDD criteria, and these STRs must be available in the eFolder in *before* examinations can be requested in all BDD cases.