



# Pension and Fiduciary (P&F) Service

## Pension Quality Call

Date: June 18, 2020

TMS: # VA TBD

### AGENDA TOPICS

- [ITEM 1: PMC STAR QUALITY ANALYSIS](#)
- [ITEM 2: QMS MITIGATION FUNCTIONALITY](#)
- [ITEM 3: UPDATE ON VA FORM 21-686c](#)
- [ITEM 4: NON-BURIAL FAVORABLE FINDINGS](#)
- [ITEM 5: CHANGES TO QUALITY CALL SOLICITATIONS](#)
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### AGENDA ITEMS

**Agenda item:** PMC STAR Quality Analysis

**Presenter:** Wakita Thompson, Analyst

**Target Audience:**  
QRT and Management

**Discussion:**

A trend analysis was conducted regarding errors cited on National Pension Quality Reviews completed during the month of May 2020.

The below chart shows a breakdown in the number of National STAR Quality Reviews completed in month of May 2020.

National Pension Quality Reviews	Total # of Claims Reviewed	Total # of Claims with Errors	Total # of Errors Cited
<b>Non-Rating (Authorization)</b>	22	2	4
<b>Rating</b>	26	4	5
<b>Rating &amp; Non-Rating</b>	48	5	9

As shown in the above chart, out of a total of 48 claims reviewed for National STAR Quality, 9 errors were cited. The 9 errors cited was spread evenly across three categories: Notification, Income and Other. Of the 9 errors, one of the errors was a Benefit Entitlement (BE) error in the rating category.

The below chart provides a brief description of the reason for each of the 9 errors, broken out by category.

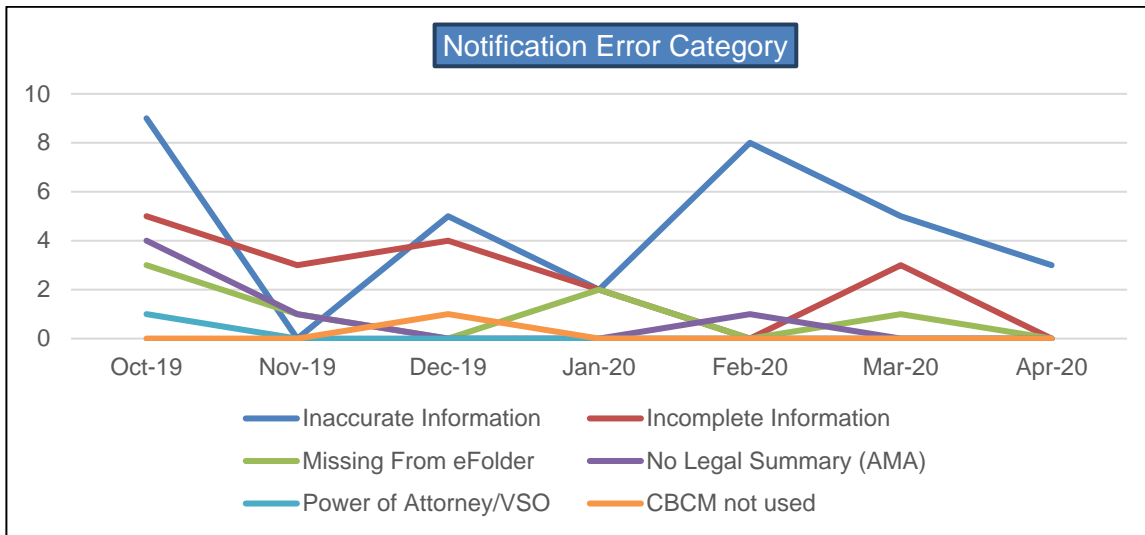
Error Category	Reason for Error
Notification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All 3 errors were due to “inaccurate information in the notification letters.”</li> </ul>
Income Errors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 of the Income errors were due to “income not properly counted.”</li> <li>1 was due to “medical expenses not correctly being calculated.”</li> </ul>
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 of the errors were due to “proper procedures not being followed (incorrect end product (EP) used).”</li> <li>1 of the errors was due to “inaccurate information in the Rating Decision.”</li> </ul>

This next chart shows the total number of errors cited, broken down by category from the start of the fiscal year (FY), October 2019 through May 2020. The chart also shows the total number of errors overturned during the time period under review. Each month in the chart below represents the claim transaction month (e.g. the month of April data represents claims completed by the PMCs in April, with the quality review being completed in May, the following month).

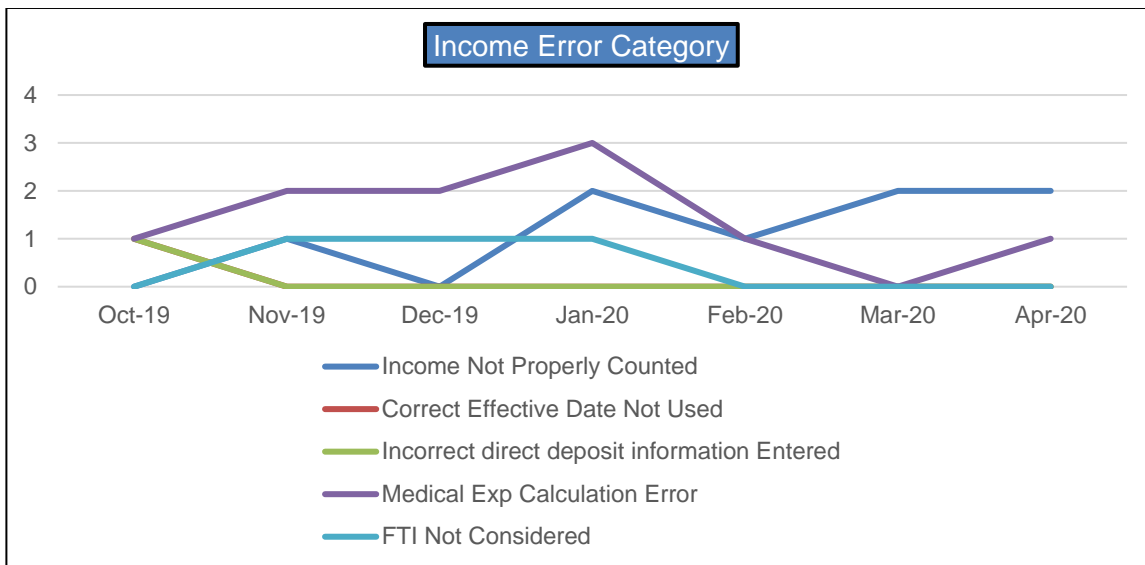
Error Category	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	%	Total	%
Accrued	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0.00%	2	1.98%
Income Errors	4	4	4	3	2	2	3	33.33%	25	24.75%
Net Worth	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%	3	2.97%
Notification Errors	22	5	10	11	9	9	3	33.33%	64	63.37%
Other	1	2	0	0	2	3	3	33.33%	13	12.87%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>9</b>		<b>107</b>	
Minus Overturns	1	1	2	0	1	2	0		7	
<b>Net # of Errors</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>		<b>100</b>	

As shown in the chart above, the errors cited in the month of May 2020 for claim transactions completed in April 2020 shows an even distribution across 3 categories. Overall, the Notification error category continues to be the area with the highest percentage (63.37%) of errors. There has been some improvement in specific areas within the Notification error category. For example, there has been a significant drop (downward trend) with Notification letter not being uploaded to the eFolder (see next table).

The below charts show the drilldown of errors cited within the Notification and Income error categories.

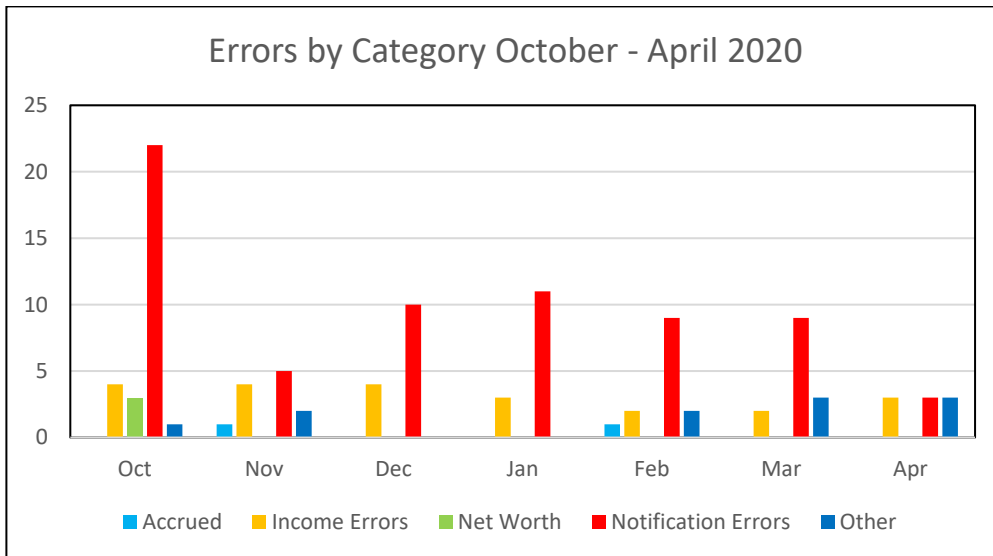


As reflected in the above chart, inaccurate information being provided in the notification letters is the area with the highest number of errors FY20 to date.



As reflected in the above chart, the “medical expense” calculation area has the highest number of errors, with “income” calculations trailing behind.

The chart on the next page provides an overview of how each category of errors is trending from the beginning of FY20 through April 2020, which reflects National STAR quality reviews performed up through May 2020.



Provided below are quick tips to share with employees when processing claims.

Questions employees should ask themselves:

- When finalizing a claim –
  - Was the income reported on the application the same as the income used to calculate the benefit payment amount?
  - Was the income calculated correctly?
  - Was the correct medical expense amount used?
  - Was everything reported but not counted, noted in the letter?
  - Is the effective date correct?
    - For surviving spouse benefit payments– Was a claim received within 1 year of the Veteran’s death (e.g. ITF, VAF 534, etc.)? If yes, the effective date is the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the month of the Veteran’s date of death.

## References/Contacts

- ✓ STAR Reports [https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/21/star/star\\_home.htm](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/21/star/star_home.htm)

**Agenda item:** QMS Mitigation Functionality

**Presenter:** Dave Coyle, Analyst

**Target Audience:**  
PMC Claims Processors and Management

## Discussion:

As first described in the April Quality Call, mitigation functionality was finally deployed in QMS on May 28, 2020. Mitigation of a cited error removes the “critical” error portion of the review but maintains that the error cited was valid and, if required, corrective action.

P&F Service will be making updates to [M21-4 Ch 7 - PMC National Quality Reviews and QRT](#) to provide additional clarification.

**Please choose one of the options:**

Error is removed. Error must not be a valid error.

Approve Recon

Error upheld

Reject Recon

Error upheld, but does not count as a critical error

Mitigate Error

[Back to Error Correction](#)

Next

**Agenda item:** Update on VA Form 21-686c

**Presenter:** Daniel Joyce, Analyst

**Target Audience:**  
PMC Claims Processors

**Discussion:**

The St. Paul PMC requested the below clarification in response to recent P&F guidance regarding VA Form 21-686c:

Can P&F take back as a topic an answer we just got from the March P&F Inquiry regarding the 686c and it not asking for number of marriages? The manual was updated to say that no development is needed if the most current form is submitted because the instructions tell the claimant what is needed, but that seems to contradict how we process forms such as the 527EZ and 534EZ, which have lots of instructions for the claimant that we still develop for. Using that as a rationale would at the very least have VSRs asking what the difference is between these forms, and why development is necessary for one but not the other.

Additionally, regarding the number of marriages not being on the 686c, the question comes up regarding whether or not that information is needed on say, an original claim (527EZ/534EZ), which does ask for that information. Further, what happens if that question is incomplete, and we end up developing for that information on a 686c, which again, doesn't ask for number of marriages? Although it would be preferable to not develop for a 686c in this situation given the update, if a VSR did request the 686c, what would the outcome be? It seems like the issue could get convoluted.

P&F Response: Thank you for your inquiry. The new VA Form 21-686c is similar to the EZ forms in that it notifies the claimants of evidence they need to submit in order to establish entitlement to the benefit they are seeking. Since the form fulfills the requirement of 38 U.S.C 5103 there is no need for development. Per [M21-1 III.i.3.A.2.c](#), the PMC should not undertake

development for evidence the VA Form 21-527EZ and 534EZ informs the claimant we need to process his/her claim. Doing so is redundant and extends the time to process a claim.

Regarding the number of marriages, per 38 CFR 3.204 we only need a statement from the claimant as sufficient proof of marriage and dissolution of a marriage. If there are any inconsistencies in that statement or in the evidence presented VA shall require the evidence listed on 38 CFR 3.205 as proof of marriage, one of which could be a copy of the marriage public record containing sufficient data to identify the parties, the date and place of marriage, and the number of prior marriages, if shown on the official record.

Obtaining the number of marriages is only required when there are inconsistencies in the record. Claims processors should not develop if the number of marriages question is blank on the VA Form 21-534EZ or VA Form 21-527EZ, **if** the claimant has provided a complete marital statement (for current marriage and prior marriages) containing date (month/year), place of event, full name and relationship to the claimant of the individuals listed in the marital history, and there are no inconsistencies with the evidence on file. If the question is blank and the claimant has not provided a complete marital statement, then the claims processor should develop to the claimant for the missing information per [M21-1 III.iii.5.A.1.f](#). The number of marriages does not need to be verified.

P&F Service is collaborating with Compensation Service to consider changes to M21-1 III.iii.5.A to reinforce this guidance.

If there are any additional questions, please submit them to the [Pension Policy and Procedures Mailbox](#).

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**Agenda item:** Non-burial favorable findings

**Presenter:** Robin Bray, Analyst

**Target Audience:**  
PMC Claims Processors

**Discussion:**

The Philadelphia PMC submitted the following question:

We are seeking clarification that the favorable findings outlined on the attached document continue to be the only favorable findings needed in Veteran Pension, Survivor Pension, DIC and accrued cases. This listing was provided in February 2019 with the roll out of AMA. We are just asking if there are situations where additional favorable findings are needed in the notification letters? We are also asking if the DIC 1318 favorable finding is indeed necessary since that type of decision would typically be included in a rating decision. It seems, if anything, an 8X8 favorable finding would be appropriate, if the surviving spouse is found eligible to that additional DIC allowance, since that is not a rating-related decision.

**P&F Response:** The list of possible non-burial favorable findings has not changed since it was released in February 2019. No additional favorable findings are planned at this time.

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**Agenda item:** Changes to Quality Call Solicitations

**Presenter:** Kelly Wante, Chief  
Rob Pomarico,  
Analyst

**Target Audience:**

Quality Review Specialists and QRT Management

**Discussion:**

Due to the high number of solicitations that are received for the Quality call that are more related to policy and procedures, please ensure these topics are sent directly to the Policy and Procedures mailbox at [PFPOLPROC.VBACO@va.gov](mailto:PFPOLPROC.VBACO@va.gov). The Quality calls will no longer be utilized to direct specific procedural guidance as P&F wants to ensure that procedures are issued consistently to all PMCs. We will continue to address any quality-related questions such as error citation reference support, categorization of errors, and clarifications of checklist questions.

**References/Contacts**

- ✓ Quality/Oversight related questions: [PFTNGQUALOVRST.VBACO@va.gov](mailto:PFTNGQUALOVRST.VBACO@va.gov)
- ✓ Policy/Procedure related questions: [PFPOLPROC.VBACO@va.gov](mailto:PFPOLPROC.VBACO@va.gov)

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*Closing Comments*

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**P&F Mailboxes:**

We will solicit for agenda topic(s) for each future Quality Call. If you have a specific quality topic suggestion, please feel free to email it to the Pension and Fiduciary (P&F) Quality mailbox at [PFTNGQUALOVRST.VBACO@va.gov](mailto:PFTNGQUALOVRST.VBACO@va.gov).

If you have questions based on specific policy or procedural questions, please feel free to email it to the P&F Policy and Procedures mailbox at [PFPOLPROC.VBACO@va.gov](mailto:PFPOLPROC.VBACO@va.gov).

**Quality Call Bulletins**

Quality Call Bulletins can be found in the following locations:

[https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/PENSIONANDFIDUCIARY/Quality\\_Call\\_Bulletins.asp](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/PENSIONANDFIDUCIARY/Quality_Call_Bulletins.asp)

The next Quality Call is tentatively scheduled for mid-August. Additional information will be given at that time.

**TMS Course:**

All Pension Quality Calls and Bulletins will be available in TMS. Once the monthly bulletin is finalized, information will be sent to the PMCs which will include the TMS #.

Stay safe everyone!