Disappearance of A Veteran

Instructor Lesson Plan

Time Required: 1.75 Hours

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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 # | 4557698 |
| Prerequisites | Prior to this lesson, the Veteran Service Representatives (VSRs) should have 12 months of VSR experience. Trainees should also have attended VSR Challenge and completed ACT training. |
| target audience | The target audience for Disappearance of a Veteran is an intermediate VSR Level.  Although this lesson is targeted to teach the VSR Intermediate Level employee, it may be taught to other Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) personnel as mandatory or refresher type training. |
| Time Required | 1.75 hours |
| Materials/ TRAINING AIDS | Lesson materials:   * Disappearance of a Veteran PowerPoint Presentation * Disappearance of a Veteran Trainee Handout Packet |
| 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 * Handouts, which include a practical exercise * 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   Trainees require access to the following tools:   * VA TMS to complete the assessment |
| 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 flipcharts, 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 trainees. The attendance records are forwarded to the Regional Office Training Managers. |

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| Introduction to Disappearance of a Veteran | | |
| INSTRUCTOR INTRODUCTION | | Complete the following:   * Introduce yourself * Orient learners to the facilities * Ensure that all learners have the required handouts |
| time required | | 0.1 hours |
| Purpose of Lesson  Explain the following: | | This lesson is intended to increase awareness and understanding of the laws and regulations governing Disappearance of Veteran claims as well as the steps claims processors must take to process Disappearance of Veteran claims. This lesson contains discussions and exercises that will allow trainees to gain a better understanding of:   * What constitutes “disappearance of a Veteran” * How to locate a Veteran * What to do if a Veteran cannot be located * What to do if a Veteran reemerges after their benefits were suspended |
| Lesson Objectives  Discuss the following:  Slide 2  Handout 2 | Upon completion of this lesson, the trainee should be able to:   * Identify the procedures for obtaining a Veteran’s address * Apply the final actions to take if a current address is unobtainable * Identify the actions a claims processor must take when processing 810 work items (WIs) associated with the disappearance of a Veteran * Recognize the principles of paying benefits to the dependents of a Veteran whose whereabouts are unknown * Identify the steps to take upon the reappearance of a Veteran | |
| 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 | When a Veteran is receiving benefits from the VA, it is important that the VA is able to contact them and send them written communication that may impact their benefits. When the VA receives such essential mail returned as undeliverable and is unable to locate a valid mailing address or otherwise contact the Veteran, the Veteran’s whereabouts are considered to be unknown. When this occurs, the VA may have to suspend the Veteran’s benefits until they have been located. | |
| STAR Error code(s) | Task 1, Task 7, Task 10, Task 11 | |
| References  Slide 3  Handout 3 | Explain where these references are located in the workplace.  All M21-1 references are found in the [Compensation and Pension Knowledge Management (CPKM) portal](https://vaww.compensation.pension.km.va.gov/).   * [38 CFR 3.158 – Abandoned Claims](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=ad275643432556b9dda942343fb89296&mc=true&node=pt38.1.3&rgn=div58" \l "se38.1.3_1158) * [38 CFR 3.656 – Disappearance of Veteran](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=ad275643432556b9dda942343fb89296&mc=true&node=pt38.1.3&rgn=div58#se38.1.3_1656) * [M21-1 III.ii.1.B.6 – Handling Returned Undeliverable Mail](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014111/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-ii-Chapter-1-Section-B-Mail-Management?query=returned%20mail#6) * [M21-1 III.vi.8 – Miscellaneous Authorization Issues](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014302/M21-1,%20Part%20III,%20Subpart%20vi,%20Chapter%208%20-%20Miscellaneous%20Authorization%20Issues) * [M21-5 7.E – Filing a Substantive Appeal](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000139940/M21-5-Chapter-7-Section-E-Filing-a-Substantive-Appeal) | |

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| Topic 1: Procedures for Obtaining a Veteran’s Address | |
| Introduction | This topic will help the trainee understand the steps they must take when attempting to obtain a Veteran’s correct address and what happens when a correct address cannot be obtained. |
| Time Required | 0.25 hours |
| OBJECTIVES/ Teaching Points | Topic objective:   * Procedures for obtaining a Veteran’s address   The following topic teaching points support the topic objective:   * First steps for obtaining a correct address * Final steps when all efforts to obtain an updated address have been exhausted |
| **Overview**  *Slide 4*  *Handout 4* | Explain that oftentimes, when the VA sends mail to a Veteran which is returned as undeliverable, the Intake Processing Center (IPC) takes steps to find a new address and resend the correspondence. However, if their efforts are unsuccessful and VA considers the mail to be “essential,” the IPC establishes an end product (EP) 290 – Disappearance of Veteran and assigns the EP to the non-rating lane.  Advise that if the Veteran has a running award, VA may eventually suspend or discontinue it if an updated address cannot obtain. |
| **First Steps for Obtaining a Correct Address**  *Slide 5*  *Handout 4-6* | Remind trainees that definitions of “essential” and “non-essential” mail are discussed in the Returned Mail lesson. Briefly review these definitions with the trainees.  Remind trainees that when VA receives essential mail returned as undeliverable, the IPC follows the procedures described in [M21-1 III.ii.1.B.6.d](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014111/M21-1,-Part-III,-Subpart-ii,-Chapter-1,-Section-B---Mail-Management) for locating a valid mailing address. Also remind trainees that telephone development should be utilized whenever possible, as telephone numbers are less likely to change during moves.  Refer trainees to the chart provided in their lesson Handout and review the procedures described in M21-1 III.ii.1.B.6.d.  If the IPC exhausts all efforts under the above reference to locate an address, then they establish EP 290 – *Disappearance of Veteran* for non-rating review. |
| Final Attempts to Obtain an Updated Address  Slide 6  Handout 6 | Explain the additional steps claims processors must take to locate a corrected mailing address:   * If direct deposit information is available, send a *Bank Letter* to the Veteran’s financial institution and set a 30-day suspense (located in Letter Creator, IPC tab). * If an address is identified within 30 days, then resend the returned mail and clear the pending EP 290 * If direct deposit information is NOT available, or there was no response to the *Bank Letter*, follow the guidance under [M21-1 III.ii.1.B.6.i](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014111/M21-1,-Part-III,-Subpart-ii,-Chapter-1,-Section-B---Mail-Management) |

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| Topic 2: Taking Final Action When a Correct Address Is Unobtainable | |
| Introduction | This topic will build upon the information presented in Topic 1 and will convey the process for taking final action when a valid address cannot be found. |
| Time Required | 0.25 hours |
| OBJECTIVES/ Teaching Points | Topic objective:   * Apply the final actions to take if a current address is unobtainable   The following topic teaching points support the topic objectives:   * Taking Final Action When a Correct Address Is Unobtainable * Denial of a Pending Claim – No Running Award * Suspending a Running Award |
| Taking Final Action When a Correct Address is Unobtainable  Slide 7-8  Handout 7 | Explain the following procedures to the trainee:   * If no award is running, take no further action and clear the pending EP 290 * If no award is running *and* a claim is pending:   + Deny the claim under the Basic Eligibility Tab in VBMS-A for the reason *Whereabouts Unknown*   + Send notice to the claimant’s last known address   + Clear the pending EP 290 and any EPs associated with pending the claim(s), and   + Consider the claim abandoned one year following the date of request (38 CFR 3.158(a)) * If an award is running:   + Clear the pending EP 290 and any EP(s) associated with the pending claim(s), if one is pending   + Send notice of proposed adverse action to discontinue benefits to the last address of record   + Establish EP 600 with a suspense date that is 65 days from the date of the notice of proposed adverse action, and   + Suspend benefits if the beneficiary does not respond within 60 days.   Inform trainees of the following:   * If the award is suspended due to undeliverable checks, it is acceptable to send contemporaneous notice rather than a notice of proposed adverse action. * Refer to [38 CFR 3.158(a)](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=ad275643432556b9dda942343fb89296&mc=true&node=pt38.1.3&rgn=div58#se38.1.3_1158) for more information on when a claim is considered abandoned and what to do if a new claim is received.   Advise trainees that a decision notice should also provide the applicable laws and regulations: 38 CFR 3.158 and 38 CFR 3.656. |
| Denial of Pending Claim – No Running Award *Slide 9*  Handout 8 | Review the screenshot on the slide and in the lesson handout – explain how to enter a decision in VBMS-A to deny the pending claim due to *Whereabouts Unknown*. Claims processors should use today’s date as the event date and award effective date and generate the award and notification as normal. |
| Suspending a Running Award  Slide 10-12  Handout 8-9 | Review the screenshots on the slides and in the lesson handout – explain that after selecting Record Decisions in VBMS-A, claims processors must click on Suspend/Resume to begin the process to suspend a running award.  Claims processors must choose *Whereabouts Unknown* for the Suspend Reason. Benefits should be suspended effective the date VA last paid the Veteran. The system will auto-populate the Last Paid on Date field with this date. (As explained earlier, the Award Information tab in Share also displays the date VA last paid a beneficiary.) Click on the Suspend/Resume button to go to the next screen.  Advise trainees that the pending suspense action must be authorized by a Senior Veterans Service Representative (SVSR), or another authorizing employee, in the Suspend/Resume screen. |

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| Topic 3: 810 WIs Associated With A Veteran’s Disappearance | |
| Introduction | This topic will address 810 WIs that are generated due to returned checks, as well as how to discontinue a Veteran’s award if efforts to find a valid address are exhausted. |
| Time Required | 0.25 hours |
| OBJECTIVES/ Teaching Points | Topic objectives:   * Identify the actions a claims processor must take when processing 810 WIs associated with the disappearance of a Veteran   The following topic teaching points support the topic objectives:   * Generation of 810 WIs associated with the disappearance of a Veteran * Deductions in Share * Six-Month Follow-Up Notice on an 810 WI |
| Generation of 810 WIs Associated with a Veteran’s Disappearance  *Slide 13*  *Handout 10* | Explain that when two consecutive checks to a Veteran are returned indicating *Whereabouts Unknown* or *Moved Left No Address*, payments are automatically suspended during processing of the returned check. An *810 Work Item, Notice of Benefit Payment Transaction (810WI) is then generated with message code 612, Account Suspended – Undeliverable Payment*. |
| Processing an 810 WI  Slide 14  Handout 10 | Explain the following steps when processing an 810 WI:   * If no award action is required, allow the suspension to continue and cancel the WI. * If a valid address is received, restart the award effective Last Paid Date per the Award Information tab in Share. * If there is a deduction for payment of life insurance or insurance loan payments, take award action to continue the insurance deduction.   Advise trainees that life insurance programs include National Service Life Insurance, U.S. Government Life Insurance Premiums, and Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance Premiums – Veterans may also be making insurance loan payments. |
| Finding Deductions in Share  Slide 15  Handout 11 | Review the screenshot on the slide and in the lesson Handout.  Advise trainees that the Deductions Balance section on the Award Information tab in Share shows the type of deduction, a description of the deduction, deduction amounts, and the overall balance of the deduction (if applicable).  Point out the Last Paid Date field to the left of the Deductions Balance field. |
| Six-Month Follow-Up Notice on an 810 WI  Slide 16  Handout 11-12 | Upon receipt of a six-month follow-up notice:   * Attempt to contact the Veteran by phone for a valid mailing address * Follow steps 1-6 of the procedures described in [M21-1 III.ii.1.B.6.d](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014111/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-ii-Chapter-1-Section-B-Mail-Management?query=returned%20mail) (returned-mail procedures) * Leave a note in VBMS detailing what actions were taken to obtain correct address * Stop the Veteran’s award as of the date in the LAST PAID DATE field on the AWARD INFORMATION tab in Share, using Whereabouts Unknown in the DECISION field on the BASIC ELIGIBILITY tab.   Advise trainees that if efforts to obtain a valid address are successful at any point in the procedure described above, update the corporate record and resume the Veteran’s award effective the date VA last paid the Veteran. Claims processors should notify the Veteran of the action taken and provide the applicable laws and regulations: 38 CFR 3.158 and 38 CFR 3.656.  ***Important:*** Explain that when a Veteran’s award is stopped as described above, the decision notice associated with this action will likely be returned as undeliverable.  If this occurs, there is no need to treat the returned decision notice as undeliverable mail. |

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| Topic 4: Payments to Dependents Upon the Disappearance of a Veteran | |
| Introduction | This topic will provide an overview of the eligibility criteria and procedures for paying a Veteran’s benefits to their dependents upon the Veteran’s disappearance. |
| Time Required | 0.25 hours |
| OBJECTIVES/ Teaching Points | Topic objectives:   * Recognize the principles of paying benefits to the dependents of a Veteran who has disappeared   The following topic teaching points support the topic objectives:   * Payments to Dependents * Eligibility Criteria * Rates of Payment to Dependents |
| Payments to Dependents  Slide 17  Handout 13 | Under [38 CFR 3.656](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=1fc030aea94a472b0906597411a7e462&mc=true&node=se38.1.3_1656&rgn=div8), if a Veteran was receiving, or was entitled to receive, disability compensation and their whereabouts remain unknown for a period of 90 days or more, those benefits may be paid to or for   * a spouse, * children, or * parents. |
| Eligibility Criteria  Slide 18  Handout 13 | Explain that in order for VA to pay benefits to dependents of a Veteran whose whereabouts are unknown, the dependent, or someone on their behalf, must make a specific request using VA Form 21-0788, *Information Regarding Apportionment of Beneficiary’s Award*.  If the legal relationship to the Veteran is not already established, the claimant must also complete and submit VA Form 21-686c, *Application Request to Add and/or Remove Dependents* and provide any required supporting documentation.  Advise that if VA Form 21-0788 is received within one year of the last date VA paid benefits to the Veteran, then VA may pay benefits to the dependent effective that same date. However, if more than one year has elapsed, benefits may only be paid to the dependent effective the first of the month following the date VA received the application form. |
| Payment Rates to Dependents  *Slide 19 Handout 13* | In compensation cases, the rate payable to the dependent(s) is either the current Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) rate or the rate of compensation payable to the Veteran, whichever is less.  Tell trainees to refer to [M21-1 III.vi.8.2](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014302/M21-1,%20Part%20III,%20Subpart%20vi,%20Chapter%208%20-%20Miscellaneous%20Authorization%20Issues#2) for additional information regarding payments to dependents upon the disappearance of a Veteran. |

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| Topic 5: Actions to Take When VA Obtains a Current Address or Upon Reappearance of a Veteran | |
| Introduction | This topic will explain the procedures for resuming payments to a Veteran whose benefits VA suspended/discontinued or paid to the Veteran’s dependents due to their disappearance. |
| Time Required | 0.25 hours |
| OBJECTIVES/ Teaching Points | Topic objectives:   * Identify the steps to undertake upon the reappearance of a Veteran   The following topic teaching points support the topic objectives:   * Reappearance of a Veteran * Resuming the Veteran’s Award if Suspended * Awards Stopped Due to Whereabouts Unknown |
| **When VA Obtains a Current Address**  Slide 20-21  Handout 14 | Explain that when a valid mailing address is received for the Veteran, claims processors should resume their award effective the Last Paid Date and notify the Veteran of the decision made. The decision notice should also provide the applicable laws and regulations: 38 CFR 3.158 and 38 CFR 3.656.  ***Note:***Per [38 CFR 3.158(c)](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=ad275643432556b9dda942343fb89296&mc=true&node=pt38.1.3&rgn=div58#se38.1.3_1158), payments can be resumed effective the date VA last paid benefits to the Veteran, regardless of how much time has passed since the Veteran’s award was suspended or stopped. There is no time limit regarding retroactive benefits in this instance*.* (only applies to awards *not* paid to a dependent based on disappearance of the Veteran).  If VA is paying the Veteran’s benefits to their dependent(s) based on the Veteran’s disappearance:   * Discontinue any awards to their dependent(s) effective the date VA last paid benefits (see the Date Last Paid field on the Award Information tab in SHARE) * Send a decision notice to the dependent(s), informing them of the reason the award was discontinued, and * Resume the Veteran’s award in accordance with the facts found and send them a decision notice. |
| Resuming a Veteran’s Award if Suspended  Slide 22-23  Handout 14-15 | Review the screenshot on the slide and in the lesson Handout. Explain that Benefits are resumed using the Suspend/Resume screen in VBMS-A. Select the box under the Suspended Awards heading and then click Suspend/Resume.  The award should now be pending resumption. An SVSR will need to authorize the action. To authorize, check the box under the Pending Resume heading and then click the Authorize/Concur button.  Based on claim availability, provide a demonstration of an award resumption. |
| Awards Stopped Due to Whereabouts Unknown  Slide 24  Handout 15 | Explain that if an award has been discontinued due to Whereabouts Unknown, claims processors must go to the Basic Eligibility tab in Share, delete the *Whereabouts Unknown* decision, and generate the award. Tell trainees to also resume the award if it was suspended.  Based on claim availability, provide a demonstration of generating an award that has been stopped due to *Whereabouts Unknown*. |
| Regional Office Specific Topics | At this time add any information pertaining to:   * Station quality issues with this lesson * Additional State specific programs/guidance on this lesson |

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| Practical Exercise | |
| Time Required | 0.1 hours |
| EXERCISE | Have the trainees answer the questions on page 16 in the lesson Handout.  Ask if there are any questions about the information presented in the exercise, and then proceed to the Review. |

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| Lesson Review, Assessment, and Wrap-up | |
| Introduction  Discuss the following: | The Disappearance of a Veteran lesson is complete.  Review each lesson objective and ask the trainees for any questions or comments. |
| Time Required | 0.1 hours |
| Lesson Objectives | You have completed the Disappearance of a Veteran lesson.  The trainee should be able to:   * Identify the procedures for obtaining a Veteran’s address * Apply the final actions to take if a current address is unobtainable * Identify the actions a claims processor must take when processing 810 work items (WIs) associated with the disappearance of a Veteran * Recognize the principles of paying benefits to the dependents of a Veteran whose whereabouts are unknown * Identify the steps to take upon the reappearance of a Veteran |