

# RECORDS MANAGEMENT LESSON PLAN

**PREREQUISITE  
TRAINING**

Prior to this training the trainees must have completed the VSR prerequisite lessons on *MAP-D*, *Share*, and the C&P Publications Page.

**PURPOSE OF  
LESSON**

The purpose of this lesson is to teach the trainees the process of reviewing a file to determine if records are required to adjudicate the claim and how to request the required records.

**PP #1-3**

Provided with the appropriate manual and regulatory references and handouts, the trainee will be able to:

- Identify the three types of service records and describe how to retrieve each type
- Identify the different types of VA treatment records and describe how to retrieve them.
- VA treatment records.
- Identify the two categories of non-federal records.
- Describe how to retrieve non-federal records.

**TIME REQUIRED**

1 hour 30 minutes classroom; 30 minutes review exercise

**INSTRUCTIONAL  
METHOD**

Participatory discussion and practical exercise

**MATERIALS/  
TRAINING AIDS**

- *Records Management* Trainee Handouts
- *Records Management* PowerPoint Presentation

**INSTRUCTOR  
PREPARATION**

Instructors should have copies of *VA Form 10-7131* and *VA Forms 21-4142* available for each trainee. Either have trainees print (from

the website) and bring the *Service Treatment Records* trainee handouts to class or have enough trainee handouts available for the trainees. The instructor should have the trainees access the C&P Publications Page located at <http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/21/publicat/index.htm>

**Critical:** Be sure to allow the trainees to complete the review exercise at the end of this training session.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Introduce yourself and inform trainees of the lesson topic.

The purpose of this lesson is to provide the VSR with an introduction to records management which includes identification of federal and non-federal records, when they are needed and how to request them.

## **MOTIVATION**

Remind the trainees of the VA's duty to assist claimants in obtaining all the required evidenced in support of his/her claim. Also explain to the trainees the important of ensuring that they have done everything they can in retrieving applicable records for their claimant. This thorough and complete review of the claimant's record will result in timely and efficient processing of claims and will result in the proper benefits being awarded to our veterans and their dependents.

## **SERVICE RECORDS**

### **TOPIC OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this topic the trainee will be able to:

- Identify three types of service records (service, medical, financial)
- Describe how to request each type of service record

### **TIME REQUIRED**

30 minutes

### **REFERENCES**

- 38 CFR 3.159
- M21-1MR I.1.C.5
- M21-1MR III.iii.2

PIES Participant Guide available on the ( C&P website--> Publications--> Guides--> User Guides--> P-->PIES participant user guide

**TEACHING POINTS**

- Identify three types of service records (service, medical, financial)
- Identify the various locations where service records may be located
- Identify the proper method to request service records

**Records and Methods of Retrieval**

Explain the process of reviewing the claim, determining what service information is needed, identifying what is of record, and then requesting what is not of record.

Point out the basic method we have for requesting service information from record facilities. State that you will explain in greater detail later about other available methods.

Review the following types of records and methods of retrieval.

**Service Records**

Explain that the term “service record” is used not only for all records kept by the military but also for these non-medical and non-financial service records we sometimes refer to as personnel records. Service Records include:

**PP #4, 5**

- Dates of service
- Character of service
- Line of duty reports
- Facts and circumstances
- Conditional discharge information
- Travel time
- Personnel records
- DD Form 214
- DD Form 1300

Morning reports (Refer trainees to page 22 of *PIES Participant Guide* for more information about morning reports. Also, see M21-1MR.III.iii.2.E.35.f.)

Retrieving Service Records

Explain that there are a number of facilities that house service records, but you are going to discuss the two main facilities - NPRC and RMC. Have trainees look at *M21-IMR.III.iii.2.K.76* for the list of all facilities.

**PP #6**

Most service records are in the possession of the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC, code 13) in St. Louis, Missouri. NPRC is not a VA facility nor is it a military facility. NPRC is under the auspices of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). NPRC has the custodial responsibility for maintaining military records for the DoD.

Explain that “service records” in this case is the narrower definition, which does not include medical or financial. Inform the trainees that NPRC maintains an internet web page at [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov) which provides information about the facility.

Explain that the Records Processing Center (RPC) and Service Medical Records Center (SMRC) were combined into the RMC on October 1, 1995. Inform them that station locations 375, 376, St. Louis RMC, RPC, and SMRC (as reflected in BIRLS) are all the same facility.

Explain that most service treatment records for recently discharged veterans have been forwarded to the RMC according to the following schedule:

<b>BRANCH</b>	<b>SEPARATION DATE</b>
<b>Army</b>	<b>Oct 16, 1992</b>
<b>Navy</b>	<b>January 31, 1994</b>
<b>Air Force</b>	<b>May 1, 1994</b>
<b>Marine Corps</b>	<b>May 1, 1994</b>
<b>Coast Guard</b>	<b>May 1, 1998</b>

RMC Records

When any portion of the medical record arrives at RMC, it is recorded in the Service Treatment Records Tracking System (SMRTS).

**Instructor note: the SMRTS H/O, is duplicated in the PIES trainee H/O. Be sure to make the**

SMRTS automatically establishes or updates a record in BIRLS.

Inform the trainees that VA also receives medical records outside

**connection between the two topics**

the time frames.

*Refer trainees to Service Treatment Records Handout and Current Workflow of records at RMC pg 4*

Inform the trainees that the chart reflects the current workflow of incoming service treatment records to the RMC.

Discuss how to tell whether or not a STR is at the RMC. Explain to the trainees how they can locate this information in *Share*.

*Refer trainees to BIRLS LOC Screen*

3101 Requests

This handout displays the flow of a 3101 request to NPRC. Explain that regardless of the information requested (service, medical, financial), all PIES 3101 requests follow this pattern. Remind the trainees to be as accurate and thorough as possible in the preparation of the screens to insure that a supplemental request is not needed. Unnecessary supplemental requests delay timely responses to other original requests.

*Refer trainees to the Military Service information requests via PIES and the STR Handout Pg 5*

Alternate Sources for Service Records

Review of the application, review of the DD Form 214, and solicitation of additional information from the claimant will provide clues as to the potential location of the needed records. Encourage telephone contacts with the claimant (use **VA Form 119** to record action) for expediency, although written contacts may be necessary.

*Refer trainee to example of letter to National Guard and/or Reserve units Pg 8*

- Reserve Units – If a veteran is an active reservist, his or her records may be with the reserve unit. Contact the veteran by telephone for specific information about the reserve unit’s address and telephone number. Contact the reserve unit by telephone to determine if the unit has the veteran’s records. Where a written request is necessary, prepare a letter using the wording found on **National Guard/Reserve Unit Letter Handout**. No separate VA Form 3101 is necessary. **Do not use PIES for these cases.**

**Instructor Note:  
Have students look  
this reference up**

- State Adjutant General’s Office – If the veteran’s service was with the National Guard, those records should be with the appropriate State Adjutant General’s Office. Refer the trainees to **M21-1MR.III. iii.2.K.79** for the addresses. Use the wording as found in the **National Guard/Reserve Unit Letter** in lieu of a **VA Form 3101**. **Do not use PIES for these cases.**

Uniformed Military Hospitals

If the veteran alleges treatment at a military hospital following discharge, request these treatment records using **VA Form 21-8359, Information Re Veteran in Uniformed Services Hospital**. Do not use **PIES to request these records**.

**Financial Records**

Discuss the following financial records that exist. Financial Records include:

**PP #7**

- Retired Pay
- Severance Pay
- Separation Pay
- Voluntary Separation Incentive
- Special Separation Benefit
- Survivor Benefit Plan

Retrieving Financial Records

Inform the trainees that the first sources to review for military financial-related issues are the veteran's DD Form 214 and BIRLS. The Miscellaneous Data (MSC) screen in BIRLS stores valuable information secured through interfaces with the Department of Defense (DoD). Where this information is incomplete or missing, the next avenue is to contact the facilities found in M21-1MR III.iii. 2.J by telephone, fax, or PIES.

Explain that if requests are made via PIES to Finance Centers, the address code must be manually entered. This type of request cannot have the address codes automatically assigned under the present PIES programming. Since financial record information is maintained separately from other military service information (*service and medical*), requests for finance-related information cannot be combined with requests for service and/or medical information.

**Health Records**

Explain what the service treatment record (STR) contains. Also explain that it does not include inpatient treatment records (clinical), finance records, or the Military Personnel Records Jacket (MPRJ) file.

**NOTE:** The MPRJ sometimes duplicates information also found in the medical treatment record (i.e. MEB, PEB, entrance examinations).

Types of medical records

The military medical treatment record for each veteran typically includes the following:

**PP #8**

- Physical examinations (including entrance and discharge physical examinations)
- Medical history
- Clinical record cover sheets and summaries of inpatient treatment
- Outpatient medical treatment
- Physical profiles
- Physical Evaluation Board (PEB) proceedings
- Medical Evaluation Board (MEB) proceedings
- Prescriptions for eyeglasses and orthopedic footwear

Retrieving Health Records

If Service Treatment Records (STRs) are needed, determine who has them. If LOC screen shows RMC has them:

**PP #9**

- As a separate folder (no claim folder at 376), they will automatically send them when claim file is established.
- And a claim folder exists at 376, you must request claims folder by COVERS and service treatment records via BUPD or BFLD.
- If no STRs are shown in BIRLS, you must request them via PIES.

**NOTE:** If the STRs fall into a time frame where they should be at the RMC, but no STRs are shown in BIRLS, e-mail the RMC for a special search for STRs. If the RMC response is negative, the trainee may request a “last-ditch” search at NPRC using PIES request code M04.

*Refer trainees to VCSM call of 03-17-05 on C&P Calendar Page*

**Reference VCSM Call of March 17, 2005 on health records**

Service treatment records (STRs) do not always contain all of a veteran's mental health treatment records. Any mental health treatment records not contained in the STRs are destroyed after five years.

DoD offers to its service members the option of obtaining mental health treatment/counseling "off-base," from civilian mental health professionals at civilian facilities.

The important point to remember is that these records do not belong to DoD and are the same as any private treatment record that would be created were a service member to decide to seek treatment off-base for a physical disability. Assuming the records have not been destroyed, regional offices may obtain these records once the veteran provides the name of the treating facility or mental health professional, the dates of treatment, and completes VA Form 21-4142, authorizing the regional office to request the records on the veteran's behalf.

**Example**

Direct the trainees to refer back to ***BIRLS LOC Screen Handout***. Focus attention on the area titled, "FLDR TYPE" under "FOLDER LOCATION DATA." This will show all the existing folders in VA for that veteran. If a separate service treatment record is at the RMC, it will be shown here. Go over the codes listed on the screen.

*Refer trainees to the Records Management Center Service Treatment Records Request handout*

Remind trainees that no automatic request for transfer of the service medical record will be generated if the claims folder is at the RMC at the time the pending issue is established. (This occurs when the claim is established in *Share*.)

Explain to the trainees that the individual's entire military medical record may not be in the custody of the RMC; however, the RMC will transfer all records in their possession upon a single regional office request. This means that sometimes the regional office will receive only a dental record if that is all there is at the RMC.

Inform the trainees that the phrase "in transit" on the LOC Screen only reflects the date that a STR folder request was generated via BIRLS input. This **is not** the date that the folder was transferred.



**Dental Records**

Explain that dental records are normally furnished with the health records, but may be requested separately if that is all that is needed. (This rarely occurs.)

**PP #10**

Retrieving Dental Records

Remind trainees that dental records are routinely furnished when STR is requested. Use PIES request code M01.

**Clinical Records**

Refer trainees to *Clinical Records (page 20)* of the *PIES Participant Guide*. Explain that if a veteran was hospitalized as an inpatient in service, a summary of the hospitalization should appear in the veteran's individual health record. Clinical records of the inpatient treatment such as detailed daily treatment records, nurse's notes and progress reports are retained by the treating facility and are not filed with the individual health record but are stored separately.

**PP # 11**

Retrieving Clinical Records

Stress to trainees that while we used to only request clinical records if the rating board asked for them, **we now must request them** if the veteran furnishes information on the application about specific inpatient treatment.

If clinical records are needed, select code C01 as the PIES request item and complete the allegation grid that will be displayed using the information provided by the veteran.

**Note:** All the information requested on the grid must be provided (i.e. dates of treatment, place of treatment., etc.) in order to make a successful request.

**VA MEDICAL RECORDS**

**TOPIC OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this topic the trainee will be able to:

- Identify the various types of VA Medical Records
- Explain how to obtain these records

**TIME REQUIRED** 30 minutes

- REFERENCES**
- M21-1MR III.iii.1.C.13
  - Compensation and Pension Records Interchange (CAPRI) Users Guide

**TEACHING POINTS** Trainees will learn about the different type of VA treatment records and how to obtain these records.

Instructor Note: The November 2008 CAPRI User Guide Link Is The Most Current.

**NOTE:** CAPRI is taught at home station when the trainees return after Centralized training. Show the trainees where the link to the User Guide is located on the C&P Home page under Business Management (215). Also have them look at the reference to the additional training material and to videos at the bottom of that page. Be sure they understand you are not teaching access to CAPRI.

**VA Medical Records** Ask trainees to brainstorm the various categories of medical records available from VA sources. List the responses on a visual and in their handout.

They should be able to readily list several of the categories below. Help them by asking leading questions if necessary.

Before you worked here, what did VA mean to you? (Medical care or hospital care).

What kinds of records might we acquire from a hospital or clinic? (treatment records, X-ray reports, test results, etc.).

Discuss the variety of records available especially those that were not mentioned in the brainstorming activity.

**PP #12** Various categories of information are available from VA medical records that can be requested by specialized CAPRI reports:

- Inpatient hospital summaries
- Other inpatient information such as admission diagnosis

- Outpatient treatment records including appointment dates and clinic visits
- 21 Day Certificates
- Reports of tests and X-rays
- Admission and discharge dates
- Demographic information including: address, Social Security number, date of birth, number of absence days, etc.
- Value of estate
- Competency reports
- Admission reports

These will be covered in more detail in other lessons.

Retrieving VA Medical Records

Explain that CAPRI is our primary link to VHA records. Explain that with the “Universal Access” almost all VHA records may be obtained using CAPRI. Who is responsible for using CAPRI may vary between offices. In some, it may be the CAPRI clerk, in others Rating Specialists, Rating Assistant Technicians, or VSRs may have access.

**PP #13**

If treatment was at a VAMC and the records cannot be accessed through CAPRI then a request must be made by VA Form 10-7131.

Ensure that all trainees have a copy of *VAF 10-7131*. Describe the use of VAF 10-7131 including the following items:

- Information identifying the veteran
- Information identifying the VAMC
- Which box to check (Part II is information VAMC requests from us, Part III is information we request from VAMC)
- Which copy to return (original and 1 copy go to VAMC, we file two copies and use one as a follow up if needed)

Records from Outreach Centers must be requested by letter with authorization (*VAF 21-4142*) attached.

Old VHA records are retired after a period of inactivity and pose special problems. If the veteran has not been seen for many years, it will be necessary to contact the VAMC directly to determine disposition of records and request help in obtaining them. Emphasize the need to take an extra step in these cases. Direct and personal contact with a VAMC may be needed to assure we have made every effort to secure available records.

### **NON-FEDERAL RECORDS**

**TOPIC  
OBJECTIVES**

- At the end of this topic the trainee will be able to:
- Identify the two categories of non-federal records
- Describe how to retrieve non-federal records

**TIME REQUIRED**

30 minutes

**REFERENCES**

- 38 CFR 3.159
- M21-1MR I.1.C.6
- M21-1MR III.ii.4

**TEACHING POINTS**

Explain to the trainees what non-federal records are and the VA's obligation in obtaining these types of records for the claimant.

Stress to the trainees the need to obtain a signed "Authorization for Release of Information", VA Form 21-4142 for non-federal records.

Provide a copy of a VA Form 21-4142, for each student, dated September, 2003, or later.

**Non-Federal Records**

**PP #14, 15**

VA has a responsibility to assist claimants in obtaining non-federal records. Examples of non-federal records are:

- Private medical records, and
- Lay or other evidence, such as

- Employment records, or
- State workers compensation records

What are relevant records?

Relevancy is determined by what is being claimed. For example, in claims for service connection, relevant documents are those that may substantiate one of the elements of service connection (incurrence, current condition, or links). However, in most cases, it may be impossible to determine relevancy before obtaining the records

**HIPAA**

**PP # 16**

The *Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)* requires the protection of privacy of health records held in the private sector. For the most part, this law does not apply to records held in Federal custody. It concerns us whenever we have to request private treatment records in association with a veteran's claim. **Stress to the trainees that when requesting private treatment records, the veteran must have completed a VA Form 21-4142, Authorization for Release of Information, that contains the proper "HIPAA" language. VA Forms 21-4142s that were printed prior to September 2003 are not HIPAA compliant.**

**REVIEW EXERCISE**

**REVIEW:**

For the *Records Management Review Exercise*, ask the trainees to work as partners or teams to come up with the right answers. Go over the correct answers as a group.

*Allow 30 minutes to complete the review exercises and 30 minutes to review the correct answers with the trainees.*

After the exercise field questions from the trainees or ask direct questions if the trainees are not forthcoming.