Compensation Service Quality Call December 2021

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Welcome to the December 2021 compensation service quality call. My name is Bonnie Kirby. I'm a senior quality review specialist with our internal QR team here in quality assurance in Nashville. As we get started this morning I would like to turn it over to our quality assurance officer, David Hannigan, to give an intro into this month's call. David.

Thank you very much, Bonnie. Welcome, everyone. I want to welcome you also to the December 2021 quality call. We are really excited about this month's call as we are adding in specific non-rating topics. Really, in an effort to better communicate with both best stations and the non-rating workload that the are always do. Really just provide more topics you're going to see this non-rating call on a quarterly basis again, we are really excited that we are able to do this but I think we have a lot of really good information for you all today. Our effort remains to provide you all through this call the most pertinent topics, the most relevant topics to help you all day today and doing a great job out there serving veterans. With that, welcome. I will kick it back to Bonnie. Bonnie, thank you.

Thanks for being on this morning, David. As he mentioned, this month we are focused on non-rating topics. Not only for DSC is within our rose, but also within the best site. Our authorization team has put together these timely and relevant topics based on quality trends, questions from the field, and some really hot issues right now. We will start off with the status of the last two years of character discharge reviews and also how the fiscal year 2022 pre-decisional determinations are going.. We will get into some rules-based processing system updates, rules for hardship request for separation pay, and roles for outdated dependency forms we will follow-up with thumbprint delay reminders, which is one disc timely topics that has been coming up to get us started we will turn it over to Bonnie Rosato. Thanks so much.

Thank you, Bonnie. Hello, everyone. I am back with a status update on the fiscal year 20 and 21 COD reviews and also to provide some information on the fiscal year 22 pre-decisional determinations. Of the quality assurance teams compensation service, the office of administrative review, and fiduciary service conducted a retrospective review of the fiscal year 2020 character discharge decisions. These determine the veteran's service to be dishonorable for [ Indiscernible ] purposes. In this presentation we provide the final consolidated results of this review. For fiscal year 2020 we received a combined example of 122 cases. Quality assurance for all three business lines agreed with 116 of the COD determinations where the character of discharge was found to be dishonorable. They are not eligible for VA lifts and services. We disagree with the dishonorable decision in six cases. And we also identified four other benefit atonement errors letter to healthcare benefits for taking these 10 PE errors into consideration the overall PE accuracy of the fiscal year 20 review is 91.8%. In addition to the 10 BE errors we did find some real procedural deficiencies that want don't impact entitlement to benefits. And all the cases that were returned to the correspondence stations. Please refer to the November quality call for a few tips on how to avoid some of the procedural errors found. This review did not identify any issues related to the LGBTQ plus or HIV status matters. Per Compensation Service retrospective review and the fiscal year 2022 predispositional review

Additional information will be provided after completing the fiscal year 21 review. For the pre-decisional reviews please keep in mind that ROs are required to upload the draft of the COD determination. And we will also need the associated VA form 21-0691 signature page as noted in the manual. Unfortunate, if both document are not uploaded we will need to return the claim to the station for correction. There are two special issue indicators relating to COD use. One is character discharge. And the other is Compensation Service review COD. It is important that claims processors do not use the Compensation Service review COD, special issue indicator, less the claim is ready to be sent to quality assurance for review of the draft COD administrative decision. Misapplication of this special issue causes claims to be incorrectly routed and can result in claims processing delays it has taken a little longer to respond to your submissions of the draft COD determinations. Please know we are working diligently to address all of them as quickly as possible we present your patience and guidance will be relayed as appropriate for each pre-decisional review.. That's all I have for now. Thank you very much now I turn it over to my teammate, Erin Hawkins.

Thank you, Bonnie. Hello, everyone. My name is Erin Hawkins , quality assurance consultant on the non-rating and authorization team. I'm going to start today by providing some Rules Based Processing System updates. Effective September 1st 2021 VA awarded the our BPS contract to a new vendor. With this change there are some changes in how claims are processed in our BPS. First, the new vendor is only authorized to complete data entry many they will only extract the information filled out on dependency applications but they will not conduct telephone development, obtain missing information, or clarification from our claimants if ABA form 21 masts -- 21 686 C is missing information the case will be excluded from the RBPS process. Instead, it will be sent to a regional office or best site to be manually work. Additionally, the new contractor will not process school child claims that indicate the school sessions will begin at a future date or instances where the child will turn 18 at a future date. And most of both of these situations the VA is required to take follow-up action to verify the school attendance action actually began as noted on the application. These claims will be manually processed to ensure that all correct procedures are followed.. As a final note, all claims for adopted children, dependent parents, helpless children, and in a claim that results in a dependency denial, except claims in which the child is over age 23, these claims are excluded from the RBPS process. These types of claims will be worked instead by a regional office or BEST site. That's all I have for updates to the RBPS system. Now I'm going to shift over to a new topic. That is requests for separation pay hardships. When a veteran receives separation pay from the military VA will recoup that separation pay from the veteran's monthly compensation payment. Typically, all the monthly benefits are withheld until the full balance is recouped if a veteran submits a request for VA to reduce the withholding amount, because the veteran is experiencing extreme financial hardship the standard process is to 1st to determine if the veteran is eligible for a reduction in the withholding amount. And if so to route the request for an advisory opinion. Starting December 7, 2021, CS service has amended the language in the advisory opinion responses when the request for reduction they now include clarification that the recalculation of the amount being withheld to recoup separation pay is not needed when the veteran's monthly benefits increase due to cost-of-living adjustment or as a result of dependence being added onto the veteran's award. Thank you. That's all I have. Now I'm going to turn it over to Isabel.

Thanks, Erin. Hello. I am Isabel. I am also quality assurance consulted on the non-rating team. Today we will discuss the importance of reviewing a form even when it appears to be complete. VA regularly updates and revises forms, so when we accept an outdated version of a form, even if it appears every blank has information, we still must develop for any information that isn't there, but is required to process the claim. If all the information on the form we did receive that is required to process the claim, then develop it is not necessary unless indicated in other policies or procedures. This is annotated in M 21-1. In our case example a veteran some is a VA form 21 minus 680 6C requesting to add his spouse to his award. The VA form 21-680 6C version is prior to the September 2018 revision dates, but is considered acceptable and is substantially complete. However, upon comparison of the forms submitted by the veteran and the current revision of the form you note the older version of the form does not provide the type of marriage. Like common law, tribal, or civil. Should you initiate development to obtain the type of marriage we go yes. Developed is required. In [ Indiscernible ] estate if we accept an outdated version of form we must develop for any information required to process the claim. The type of marriage is required prior to adding a spouse onto the work, because VA has different develop missteps to obtain documentary evidence, depending on the type of marriage. An example would be a common law marriage. The develop process for this type of marriage is buried and may result in a denial. If we didn't know the veteran was in a common law marriage and added the spouse this may result in a benefit entitlement error. Now back to Erin to discuss the printing delay issue that is affecting our claims processing.

Good morning. Hello again. This is Erin for my final topic on the printing delays. The office of field operations issued updated interim guidance on November 19th 2021 addressing the significant printing delays. These procedures apply to all correspondence sent through the package manager for centralized print on or after July 13th, 2021. The updated guidance requires VA to extend response periods for an additional 30 days, bringing the total additional response period to 90 days. So, when should we extend the responsibility to? If package manager was used to send the correspondence, such as a developed letter were due process and the suspense has expired without a response from the claimant, then in this instance we will give the claimant an additional 30 days to respond to our request. We will also give an extension if we issue a new request for information to the claimant. As a note, VA will apply these extensions in 30 day increments. When can VA take action on the claim? Well, we can proceed with implementing our proposal or processing the claim taking it to the next steps without adding an extension if, the claimant is contacted and there is a documented waiver of their right to respond, where we received the request, or the response period has already been extended for a total of 90 days beyond the initial 90 day period. This guidance does apply to claims that involve attorney fees the VMA only release the agent or attorney fee payment after the 60 day initial response period if both the claimant and the attorney or agent agree to the payment or the release of funds. If consent is not resume for both the claimant and representative then VA will hold the fees for the it additional 90 days. If no response is received from the claimant or the representative that after a total of 150 days, which includes the first 60 day response period and the additional 90 day extension period, then after those 150 days have passed VA may release the funds. The suspense period for each tract item should be updated in 30 day increments and a correlating note, a permanent note, should be entered in VBMS to explain the reason for the extension. This slide has a visual representation of the timeline for taking adverse action after issuing due process. In this example due process was sent on July 20th, 2021, and we did not receive a response from the claimant during the initial 60 day due process period. On September 20th, 2021, a claims processor notes that we cannot take final action yet, because this claim was impacted by a printing delay. The due process period must be extended for an additional 30 days. On October 20th, 2021 we evaluated the claim again and realized we had not received a response yet. Another 30 day extension was added. On November 20, 2021, again, the claim was changed and again VA notes we did not receive a response from the claimant, so an additional 30 day extension was added. Finally, on December 20th, 2021, he claims processor reviews the claim notes VA still has not received a response from the claimant. But, because VA had already extended the response period three times for a total of 90 additional days VA can now proceed with implementing the proposal from July 20, 2021. The claims processor moves forward with taking final action. Two final notes on the printing delays. First, a reminder that an extension is not required once a response to include a negative response is received. Or if there is a documented waiver of the extension or a similar correspondence in which consent is communicated that the individual will waive the extension period. Second, a reminder that automated batch letters issued from Heinz are not impacted by the printing delay, as they are not sent to be in VBMS for centralized print please refer to the office of field operations guidance dated 2021 for tips on how to verify if the correspondence was issued by Heinz and examples of the types of correspondence they sent via that batch automated process. Thank you very much I will now turn it over to Bonnie.

Thanks, Erin. I want to thank all of our presenters from our authorization non-rating team for putting together the topics this month. We are excited to work in some more calls about nonreading topics over the next remaining nine months of the fiscal year.

Now that we have reached the end of the presentation let's talk about how to suggest topics or be a presenter on future calls as well as when the next one will be recorded. If you have a topic you would like to present on a future call please run it by your coach and send us an email at our internal QRS box listed here. We would love to have guest presenters. We can help you prepare. Whether it's non-rating or rating, anything that you think the field could benefit from based on trends or things you are seeing while doing reviews or rating cases would be great. If you have a suggestion for a topic please send an email to the same mailbox with the information shown. Almost every call includes suggestions from the field, so if you notice a trend or have an idea please tell us. We try to respond to all the suggestions we receive and even if we don't integrate it right away that doesn't mean it wouldn't be used on a future call. You can find bulletins from past calls on the Compensation Service Internet. And the full training with audio recordings and PowerPoint is available on both CMS and the learning catalog. Thanks for joining us this month. The next call will be recorded the second week of January that is January 10th. Have a good holiday season, a great new year, and we will see you all next month. Thanks so much.

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