Compensation Service Pre-Discharge staff host this call to announce updates, address issues, and field questions related to Pre-Discharge Programs (BDD/IDES). All Military Services Coordinators (MSCs), Disability Rating Activity Sites (DRAS), Regional Offices and other VA personnel supporting Pre-Discharge Programs are invited to participate.

This Read-Ahead (R/A) is provided to facilitate discussion during the conference call.

The Call Notes for the April 2022 Call are in Appendix 1. The TMS # for this month’s call will be provided during the call and will be active within a week of the call’s completion. A Calendar Blast will notify the field when the TMS # is active.

**Call-in Information**

Microsoft Teams meeting

[Click here to join the meeting](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3Ameeting_MGQ3YzU1N2EtMWJiOC00NzA4LWJmYmYtYTc3ZjhlYjFmNWY5%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22e95f1b23-abaf-45ee-821d-b7ab251ab3bf%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22a0338b5c-0526-4e13-9809-5d0ecc8cdeb8%22%7d)

+1 872-701-0185: 63193284#

The R/A and slides will be attached to the Teams Chat. They are also located on the [BDD](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/vbadod/predischarge.asp) and [IDES](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/vbadod/IDES.asp) Homepages.

Note: The slides will not be available on the homepages until about noon of call day.

Remember to mute your microphone and turn off your camera.

To ask a question after the call begins, please raise your hand or type it in the Teams Chat—do not unmute to make comments or respond to questions.

Raise your Hand to ask a question over the phone, and you will be called upon for your question/comment. Once your question/comment is addressed, lower your hand (click the hand again). **Please do not talk/blurt out your question/comments unless called upon.** Scenario/Case Specific questions will not be answered on the call. Send an email with details to the appropriate staff email box. Ask questions in reference to the topic(s) being discussed, all other questions should be asked during Open Floor.

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 R/A is available and for notification when the TMS number is active.

General Topic for Discussion

**Military Services Coordinator Office Hours**

Purpose:

To enhance the customer experience of our most influential stakeholders, Military Service Coordinators (MSC) through direct engagement and timely responses to issues and concerns.

Objectives:

• Expand communication and understanding of operational policies related to PreDischarge (IDES/BDD) programs.

• Create a baseline measurement to assess the impact of PreDischarge efforts through direct feedback/engagement via the use of “Office Hours”

• Provide opportunities for direct contact between PreDischarge staff and MSCs in the field offices.

Plan of Action:

• Establish a new Teams Channel specifically for MSCs

• Establish core hours for active chat questions and answers

* Beginning - June 1, 2022
* Specify communications to allow staff engagement and direct responses for general inquiry questions that can be answered promptly via chat
* Guidance and communications forthcoming

**Pre-Discharge, BDD and IDES Homepages**

We have begun to transition all information that applies to both BDD and IDES to the “[Pre-Discharge Programs](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/VBADOD/Pre_Discharge_Programs.asp)” Homepage (Ex: Monthly Call information), however, that information will also be on the [BDD](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/vbadod/predischarge.asp) and [IDES](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/vbadod/IDES.asp) Homepages during the transition. Information that is specific to either BDD or IDES will remain on the [BDD](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/vbadod/predischarge.asp) and [IDES](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/vbadod/IDES.asp) Homepages until further notice.

**Required Use of New Vendors for Pre-Discharge Examinations**

As indicated in the Office of Field Operations (OFO) email, dated April 6, 2022, the Medical Disability Examination Office (MDEO) announced that VBA had awarded new contracts to support the BDD and IDES programs. Please refer to the email below for further information about new vendors associated with the “Pre-Discharge” and “Overseas” contract regions.

The OFO email dated April 29, 2022, stated:

*Effective immediately, claims processors must select the recommended vendor shown in the Exam Management System (EMS) for all IDES and BDD examination requests****.*** *The Exam Provider options in the Veterans Tracking Application (VTA) were updated to reflect the new vendors on Thursday April 28, 2022, and appear as options in the EMS.*

 *MSCs and claims processors are to follow the* [*Contract Exam Inquiry Guidelines*](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvbaw.vba.va.gov%2Fbl%2F21%2Fcontractexams%2Fdocs%2FContract%2520Exam%2520Inquiry%2520Guidelines.pdf&data=05%7C01%7C%7Cb6b4cbe7d3e5488a00ac08da29fb79fb%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637868457296679878%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=rDDYXSr%2FbuVjNKGcmx89omqhKqBpVDf7wqE4IHlbTUM%3D&reserved=0) *where vendor information may be found and should consult with their station* [*Exam Liaisons*](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvbaw.vba.va.gov%2Fbl%2F21%2Fcontractexams%2Fdocs%2FExam%2520Liaison%2520Directory.xlsx&data=05%7C01%7C%7Cb6b4cbe7d3e5488a00ac08da29fb79fb%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637868457296679878%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=kFDycnX438Hsci4NYTRiX22YSGjJMzK7z0chdKcR2u4%3D&reserved=0) *on any exam-specific questions.*

*Please direct any questions to* *IDES.VBACO@VA.GOV* *or* *Predischarge.VBACO@va.gov**.*

**VBA Medical Disability Examination International Contract Awards**

The International contract provides C&P examinations for Veterans and Service members residing within US territories as well as foreign locations. This contract award increased the number of primary vendors from one to two: Veterans Evaluation Services (VES) and QTC Services, Inc. QTC’s International Go-Live dates are developing with the goal to conclude by EOFY. Firm dates and locations will be announced when available.

**BDD Specific Topics**

**Notification of Interest (NOI) & AHLTA Web Print (AWP) Data Process Testing**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DoD) continue to test BDD Notification of Interest (NOI) Data. We are now at a stage to evaluate the electronic transferal of portions of the Service Treatment Records (STRs) to VBMS prior to a Service member’s (SM) separation. Both agencies are looking to alleviate the burden of SMs having to obtain and submit copies of their STRs in support of their BDD claim. Testing is anticipated to conclude by the end of June 2022. During testing:

* Predischarge staff will validate that the expected documents properly transferred to VBMS.
	+ Expected documents are (also see **Figure 1** below**)**:
		- “Administrative - Pre‐Separation Record Statement”
		- “Administrative - STR AHLTA” (the AWP)
		- “Administrative - STR MHS Genesis (MHS Genesis PDF)” if any. **NOTE:** USMC is currently not using MHS Genesis.
* BDD participants will continue to submit STRs for their current period of service and meet all other requirements found in [M21-1, X.i.6.B.1.a.](https://www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ssnew/help/customer/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001018/content/554400000177950/M21-1-Part-X-Subpart-i-Chapter-6-Section-B-Benefits-Delivery-at-Discharge-BDD-and-Initial-Processing#1d)
* BDD claims processors will continue to review all evidence and determine if STRs are substantially complete for records development purposes per [M21-1, III.ii.2.A.1.f.](https://www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ssnew/help/customer/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001018/content/554400000014117/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-ii-Chapter-2-Section-A-General-Information-on-Service-Records?query=substantially%20complete%20strs#1f) Additionally, duplicate documents that have evidentiary value to support a claim or contention will be managed according to the Duplicate Documents section of the [VBMS Core User Guide - Release 19.0.5](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/VBMS/docs/VBMS_Core_User_Guide_Release_19_0_5.pdf).

**Figure 1**



**Current BDD Program Timeliness**

As VA’s frontline contact with SMs and Veterans, it is vital that we are transparent in our communications regarding claims processing times. Below is the current program timeliness data:

|  |
| --- |
| **BDD Timeliness Data** |
| **Data Points** | **Goal** | **FYTD** |
| **Receipts** |  | **23,850** |
| **Pending** |  | **4,780** |
| **Completed** |  | **25,813** |
| **# Completed w/in 30 Days of Discharge** |  | **10,750** |
| **% Completed w/in 30 Days of Discharge** | **100%** | **45.1%** |
| **Avg. Days to Complete FYTD** | **30** | **69.54** |

***Source:*** *Tableau BDD History Report, May 3, 2022*

IDES Specific Topics

**HAIMS/VBMS/STR/DBQ Update**

The IDES Program Office, in coordination with DoD, continues to track the HAIMS/VBMS/STRS/DBQ procedures.

* Predischarge staff continues to work with VBMS, DAS and HAIMS to resolve any challenges identified.
	+ Duplicate DBQs that appear as STR in the VBMS eFolder
* Ensure the Pending CEST Report daily is pulled daily. If MTFs are having issues with uploading or not aware of the HAIMS/VBMS/DBQ transfer process, send details including VTA Case ID (if applicable) to the IDES Mailbox

Current IDES Program Timeliness

As outreach specialists and VA’s frontline contact with SMs and Veterans, it is vital that we are transparent in our communications regarding claims processing times. Below is the current program timeliness data:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Stage/Phase** | **IDES Goal (AD/NAD)** | **April 2022 (AD/NAD)** |
| **Claim Dev**  | **5/11** | **6/6** |
| **Medical Stage** | **32** | **51/52** |
| **Proposed Ratings** | **20** | **11/20** |
| **Recon Ratings**  | **4** | **8/14** |
| **Exit Interviews** | **14** | **6/5** |
| **Final Ratings** | **30/na** | **24/na** |

 ***Source:*** *VTA Completed Reports (Days to Complete Including Deferment) May 2, 2022 (830am ET).*

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

VTA Specific Topics

**VTA Version 2.3.14**

2.3.14 was released on April 27, 2022. The two changes most affecting VA are:

 1. New Dropdown Choices in “Revised VA Rating Results” on the DRAS Tab.

 2. Exam Vendors have been updated in dropdowns (tabs and reports).

The complete list of change requests is located in [Folder 6](https://vta.va.gov/VTA/secured/DES/View/HomepagePKCFileManager.aspx?FolderId=207) in the VTA IDES Program Knowledge Center.

Upcoming Conference Calls

The next BDD/IDES Call is scheduled for Tuesday, June 14, 2022, 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 BDD Mailbox no later than close of business (COB), Friday, May 27, 2022.

Open Floor

**Appendix 1: Call Notes from the April 2022 BDD/IDES Conference Call**

**Proper Disability Benefits Questionnaire (DBQ) Selection**

**Question: Our office was instructed for Sleep Apnea not to order the SHA, but to order the Sleep Apnea DBQ. Do we order both the Sleep Apnea and SHA DBQs?**

**Answer:** No, do not order the Sleep Apnea DBA; the SHA will drive the need for any Sleep Apnea DBQ.

**Question: I’ve been having an issue with QTC wanting clarification every time the Gulf War (GW) verbiage is on exam request as part of a Burn Pit Exposure claim and they want me to order a GW GENMED DBQ. Apparently MDEO is not on the same page, what is correct?**

**Answer:** MDEO is aware and are working to ensure all vendor employees are accepting SHA with the needed GW language. If there are claims based on environmental hazards during Southwest Asia service, and an examination is necessary as defined in [M21-1, Part VIII.ii.1.B.2.a](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov%2Fsystem%2Ftemplates%2Fselfservice%2Fva_ssnew%2Fhelp%2Fcustomer%2Flocale%2Fen-US%2Fportal%2F554400000001018%2Fcontent%2F554400000177438%2FM21-1%2C-Part-VIII%2C-Subpart-ii%2C-Chapter-1%2C-Section-B---Developing-Claims-Based-on-Service-in-Southwest-Asia-Under-38-CFR-3.317&data=05%7C01%7C%7C057732a2ea61451cebd508da27927b5a%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637865807326268793%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=jGDi3TdmeDQrEzxwR9%2FPP7LeeyNlrv3EqYlfQKddn5Y%3D&reserved=0), do ***not*** request the *Gulf War General Medical Examination (Including Burn Pits) Disability Benefits Questionnaire*. Ensure that the *Notice to Examiners in Southwest Asia Claims* and definitions from [M21-1, Part VIII.ii.1.B.2.m and n](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov%2Fsystem%2Ftemplates%2Fselfservice%2Fva_ssnew%2Fhelp%2Fcustomer%2Flocale%2Fen-US%2Fportal%2F554400000001018%2Fcontent%2F554400000177438%2FM21-1%2C-Part-VIII%2C-Subpart-ii%2C-Chapter-1%2C-Section-B---Developing-Claims-Based-on-Service-in-Southwest-Asia-Under-38-CFR-3.317&data=05%7C01%7C%7C057732a2ea61451cebd508da27927b5a%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637865807326268793%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=jGDi3TdmeDQrEzxwR9%2FPP7LeeyNlrv3EqYlfQKddn5Y%3D&reserved=0) have been included as part of the EMS request for the SHA. Manually insert any needed language if absent. See M21-1, [X.i.6.C.1.b.](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov%2Fsystem%2Ftemplates%2Fselfservice%2Fva_ssnew%2Fhelp%2Fcustomer%2Flocale%2Fen-US%2Fportal%2F554400000001018%2Fcontent%2F554400000177951%2FM21-1-Part-X-Subpart-i-Chapter-6-Section-C-Division-of-Responsibilities-Benefits-Delivery-at-Discharge-BDD-and-BDD-Excluded-Claims%3Fquery%3Dgulf%231b&data=05%7C01%7C%7C057732a2ea61451cebd508da27927b5a%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637865807326268793%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=UD61%2F7KmNIdRZDQAfBZGVL6JZjV2uNAS9sHd0WyCo5g%3D&reserved=0) , [X.i.6.F.2.d.](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov%2Fsystem%2Ftemplates%2Fselfservice%2Fva_ssnew%2Fhelp%2Fcustomer%2Flocale%2Fen-US%2Fportal%2F554400000001018%2Fcontent%2F554400000177955%2FM21-1-Part-X-Subpart-i-Chapter-6-Section-F-Integrated-Disability-Evaluation-System-IDES-Development-and-Examinations%3Fquery%3Dgulf%232d&data=05%7C01%7C%7C057732a2ea61451cebd508da27927b5a%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637865807326268793%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=evD2hCAo5A297krWiBd3L8EufnZdtYWL6ogd23bmlK8%3D&reserved=0) and [VIII.ii.3.B.1.d.](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov%2Fsystem%2Ftemplates%2Fselfservice%2Fva_ssnew%2Fhelp%2Fcustomer%2Flocale%2Fen-US%2Fportal%2F554400000001018%2Fcontent%2F554400000177446%2FM21-1-Part-VIII-Subpart-ii-Chapter-3-Section-B-Processing-Claims-Based-on-Exposure-to-Environmental-Hazards-During-the-Gulf-War-GW%3Fquery%3Dburn%2520pit%231d&data=05%7C01%7C%7C057732a2ea61451cebd508da27927b5a%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637865807326268793%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=XZBrbl2rQqBm6mgpWV1QPW93mq3U68ymdj1LFV0WJH0%3D&reserved=0)

**Recent PEBLO Guidance for when Previously Claimed Conditions are Deemed Unfitting and Referred**

**Question: Is this just a matter of uploading the notice? I got an email with adding new conditions, do I need to double check to ensure that the issue was claimed or examined? Or can we assume that the PEBLO has already confirmed this?**

**Answer:** MSCs should review the record to ensure that the new issue has been claimed and examined. If the issue was claimed and examined, yes; all the MSC is required to do is upload the notice to the eFolder. However, if the new issue was not claimed, the MSC must inform the PEBLO that a new 0819 is required.

**Question: If a case is re-enrolled under a new case ID but no new exams are needed, what do we put in VTA for ME start date.**

**Answer:** In any VTA case where no exams are required/warranted, MSCs should check the *No New Exams Ordered Checkbox.* This will auto-populate the ME Start and End Dates with the Current Date.

**Question: When new referred conditions are added in Non-Active Duty (NAD) cases, do we need to obtain LODs for the new referred condition?**

**Answer:** Yes. In NAD cases, DoD must provide a LoD (or equivalent documentation) that indicates each referred condition is considered by DOD to be “duty-related.” If no LOD/indication was provided with the notice of new referred conditions, the MSC must request this from the PEBLO and explain that no LOD (or equivalent) is provided, the new issue will not be considered properly referred and could potentially be denied or deferred on the proposed rating decision.

**Question: Do we need to update the number of claimed contentions in VTA?**

**Answer:** No; we are discussing situations in which *previously claimed* conditions are now considered referred—so the number of claimed conditions will not change in these instances. PEBLOs have been advised to update the number of referred conditions in VTA.

**Question: Do we need to update the contentions in VBMS to show them as referred?**

**Answer:** No; there is no requirement to indicate which contentions are considered referred in VBMS.

**Question: When new conditions are added—who is responsible for ordering those exams, the MSC or DRAS?**

**Answer:** If the condition was not previously claimed and requires new exams, the case will need to be disenrolled from VTA, and restarted under a new case ID. Under the new case ID, the MSC would then complete all typical actions, including requesting exams.

**Question: What happens if the case is already at the DRAS when the new condition is added?**

**Answer:** Notice of the disenrollment will be available to the DRAS via VTA. However, it may be helpful for the MSC to send notice to the DRAS mailbox that advising of the situation. It is not necessary for the EP689 to be brokered back to the MSC station for the MSC to complete their required actions.

**Current IDES Program Timeliness**

**Question: Are there plans to adjust the Stage goals for IDES?**

**Answer:** There are no immediate changes planned. However, VA and DoD are currently in discussions regarding potential changes to stage goals in consideration of current performance.

**Question: Would it be possible to exclude weekends?**

**Answer:** No, all IDES program performance goals are measured in calendar days; No change to how days are counted is expected.

**Open Floor**

**Question: I have a question about the SHPE exams; our installation is completing SHPEs over the phone, and there has been reports that they’ve been completed in less than one minute. Is this appropriate?**

**Answer:** The SHPE exam is a DoD function and is covered by DoD policy. As such, our team cannot speak SHPE requirements.

**Question: I recently got an error in a BDD case for not applying a wet-ink date stamp on a 21-526 I received from via email? In these instances, am I supposed to print out these documents just to put a date-stamp?**

**Answer:** No; when applications are received electronically (e.g., via email), they should be uploaded directly into the VBMS eFolder. The Date of Receipt is captured will be entered by the MSC and recorded in VBMS when the document is uploaded to VBMS. It is not necessary to print out applications that were received electronically, solely to apply a date stamp.

**Question: When exams are completed. do I need to go in and close out the corresponding tracked items? Or will this be done automatically?**

**Answer:** Tracked items should be automatically closed when exams are fully completed and have been received in the eFolder. However, if an MSC finds that the exams are complete and available in the eFolder, but the tracked items are still open, the MSC must manually mark the tracked item as “Received." Please see page 6 of [EMS Defect Job Aid.pdf (va.gov)](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/21/contractexams/docs/EMS%20Defect%20Job%20Aid.pdf) for further information.

**Question: Do I need to make IDES cases RFD, or will that be done automatically? Sometimes this seems to be done automatically.**

**Answer:** MSCs will need to manual make the EP 689 RFD when all exams are complete. The EP 689 is exempt from the “auto-RFD” functionality.

**Question: Can va.gov be prevented from displaying information about the status of the EP 689? I always get inquiries from IDES participants who see that the rating decision is complete, and they should soon be receiving notice. This puts the MSC in a tough position to have to explain that we can’t provide the rating and they have to get this from the PEBLO.**

**Answer:** We’ll research the issue to see if any change can be made how EP 689 information is displayed in va.gov.