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.

Call Notes for the June 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.

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

**Changing Exam Vendors in EMS**

As discussed on last month’s call, EMS will auto select the exam vendor when exam requests are input. MSCs SHOULD NOT manually select another vendor unless VHA is the auto-selected vendor and MSCs are expected to adhere to this guidance. If you have a question/issue/concern contact the Exam Staff and CC the BDD Mailbox or IDES Mailbox.

**Optum/OptumServe/LHI added as Exam Vendor**

Effective July 5, 2022, Optum/OptumServe was added as an Exam Vendor for CONUS exams, however, they are identified as LHI in VBMS.

When IDES exams are being conducted by Optum/OptumServe/LHI, IDES MSCs and DRAS’ will follow these instructions until Optum/OptumServe/LHI is in VTA..



Note: LHIs parent company is Optum, and Optum is used in the instructions.

**Assignment of Alternate MSC or Point of Contact**

All BDD and IDES MSCs are reminded of the importance and duty we have to support participants in these programs. It is very important that MSCs are available to answer questions or provide status updates to SMs. As a professional courtesy an out of office message with a POC should be applied to your Outlook Account when you know you will be on leave, etc.

**QTC came on-line June 27th in VBMS as an Exam Provider in Germany and Japan**

VBMS began assigning examinations in Germany and Japan to QTC on **Monday June 27, 2022**. Claims processors **must** select the recommended vendor as indicated in EMS.

**Japan:**

While this addition is projected to reduce the Medical Evaluation inventory and increase exam timeliness, we are experiencing delays due to strict Visa requirements due to COVID.

If you have questions, email BDD Mailbox or IDES Mailbox

**BDD Specific Topics**

**Military Sexual Trauma (MST) Claims**

Last month OFO informed us that additional information regarding the MST Operations Center’s duties and responsibilities are forthcoming. Once issued, our office will relay to field.

Meanwhile, develop BDD MST claims appropriately to include ensuring the MST Special Issue is assigned and the ordering of all needed exams. After consultation with the Compensation Service Policy and Quality Assurance Staffs, both agreed and stated that if the sexual assault happens for Active Duty Service members (ADSM) there is no need for the special MST language in exams.

In ADSM MST cases, stressor details and/or nexus opinions are not needed for rating purposes, as service connection for any chronic disability diagnosed on AD can be granted on a direct basis.

Once all development actions are complete, process BDD claim per [M21-1, X.i.6.C.1.d](https://www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ssnew/help/customer/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001018/content/554400000177951/M21-1-Part-X-Subpart-i-Chapter-6-Section-C-Division-of-Responsibilities-Benefits-Delivery-at-Discharge-BDD-and-BDD-Excluded-Claims#1d). Assignment of the MST Special Issue will ensure National Work Queue recall & distribution to and to an MST Care Site.

**BDD M21-1 Sections A, B and D Updates**

All BDD and BDD-excluded M21-1 sections have now been updated, [2022 Changes by Date](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/topic/554400000022513/2022). Below is a summary of the recent BDD M21-1 sections A, B and D changes. A review of the section C updates is available in the [March 2022 MSC Training Event slides](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/VBADOD/docs/IDES/FinalMarch2022MSCTrainingEventSlides2.pptx).

[**Section A, X.i.6.A:**](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177949/M21-1%2C-Part-X%2C-Subpart-i%2C-Chapter-6%2C-Section-A---Introduction-to-Pre-Discharge-Claims)

[M21-1, X.i.6.A.1.a](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177949/M21-1%2C-Part-X%2C-Subpart-i%2C-Chapter-6%2C-Section-A---Introduction-to-Pre-Discharge-Claims) shows the goal of the BDD program is to provide every Service member (SM) an in-service examination(s) and a decision on their claim 30 days or less following discharge from active duty.

This important note was added to [M21-1, X.i.6.A.2.d](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177949/M21-1%2C-Part-X%2C-Subpart-i%2C-Chapter-6%2C-Section-A---Introduction-to-Pre-Discharge-Claims), “***Important***: This guidance is not applicable to a request for higher-level review (HLR) filed on [*VA Form 20-0996, Decision Review Request: Higher Level Review*](https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-20-0996-ARE.pdf). HLRs are processed according to standard policies and procedures in [M21-5, Chapter 5](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000141004/M21-5%2C-Chapter-5---Higher-Level-Review-Procedures).”

[**Section B, X.i.6.B:**](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177950/M21-1-Part-X-Subpart-i-Chapter-6-Section-B-Benefits-Delivery-at-Discharge-BDD-and-Initial-Processing)

SMs are required to provide a substantially complete copy of the Service Treatment Records (STRs) from the current qualifying period of service per [M21-1, X.i.6.B.1.a](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177950/M21-1-Part-X-Subpart-i-Chapter-6-Section-B-Benefits-Delivery-at-Discharge-BDD-and-Initial-Processing). The definition of substantially complete can be found in [M21-1, III.ii.2.A.1.f](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014117/M21-1%2C-Part-III%2C-Subpart-ii%2C-Chapter-2%2C-Section-A---General-Information-on-Service-Records#1f).

All references to EP 337 have been removed and all BDD-excluded claims are established with a rating EP of 010, 110, or 020 and the associated non-BDD claim label.

[M21-1, X.i.6.B.3.d, Step 3](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177950/M21-1-Part-X-Subpart-i-Chapter-6-Section-B-Benefits-Delivery-at-Discharge-BDD-and-Initial-Processing#2) now includes a note to check [Veterans Information Solution](https://vaww.visr.aac.va.gov/vis/) for DoD military service information, including anticipated discharge dates. Claims processors can also go to the [Service Members Civil Relief Act website](https://scra.dmdc.osd.mil/scra/) for active-duty status of SMs, reservists and National Guard members.

The following are acceptable formats for the STRs per M21-1, [M21-1, X.i.6.B.3.d, Step 5](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177950/M21-1-Part-X-Subpart-i-Chapter-6-Section-B-Benefits-Delivery-at-Discharge-BDD-and-Initial-Processing#2)

* photocopies
* compact disc – read only memory (CD-ROM)
* digital video disc
* flash or thumb drives
* microfiche, and
* digital media files transferred by a secure method.

If the SM submits original STRs, copy the STRs and return the records to the SM during the office visit.

If the intake site does not have the capacity to copy all the STRs due to workload, make the photocopier available to the SM. If the intake site does not have a photocopier, instruct the SM to make a copy of their STRs and submit those copies with their claim.

[M21-1, X.i.6.B.3.g](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177950/M21-1-Part-X-Subpart-i-Chapter-6-Section-B-Benefits-Delivery-at-Discharge-BDD-and-Initial-Processing#3b) instructions have been updated on claims received more than 180 days prior to discharge. If the MSC is unable to perform the VBMS-A action, contact your supervisor to complete that action at the RO.

* establishing a ***non***-BDD EP 400 and processing the claim outside of the BDD program
* deny the SMs claim using the *On Active Duty* drop-down selection on the BASIC ELIGIBILITY tab in VBMS-Awards
* notifying the SM of the reason for the denial by sending the *Non-BDD Claim – Request Resubmission* letter in the [Letter Creator](http://vbacodmoint1.vba.va.gov/bl/21/LetterGenerator/LG.asp) tool (using the BDD exclusion reason “More than 180 days of remaining service”),

There is now updated guidance in [M21-1, X.i.6.B.3.j](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177950/M21-1-Part-X-Subpart-i-Chapter-6-Section-B-Benefits-Delivery-at-Discharge-BDD-and-Initial-Processing#3b) for BDD claims received ***without*** substantially complete STRs for the current period of service.

* establish an EP 336 with the *Pre-Discharge Excluded* claim label
* enter a note in VBMS indicating that the claim does not meet BDD requirements because it was received without STRs
* follow up twice with the SM for the STRs by contacting them via telephone, e-mail, or letter (if telephone and e-mail development is not successful), with a 15-day suspense for each follow-up request,
* Two follow-up requests for STRs must be completed with a 15-day suspense for each follow-up request before the claim is excluded from the BDD program for inability to obtain STRs.

[**Section D, X.i.6.D**](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177952/M21-1-Part-X-Subpart-i-Chapter-6-Section-D-Ancillary-Benefits-and-Other-Issues-Involving-BDD-or-BDD-Excluded-Claims)**:**

The former appeals guidance prior to the Appeals Modernization Act (AMA) was removed from [M21-1, X.i.6.D](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177952/M21-1-Part-X-Subpart-i-Chapter-6-Section-D-Ancillary-Benefits-and-Other-Issues-Involving-BDD-or-BDD-Excluded-Claims).

The VA Form 28-1900 name was corrected in M21-1, [M21-1, X.i.6.D.1.b](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177952/M21-1-Part-X-Subpart-i-Chapter-6-Section-D-Ancillary-Benefits-and-Other-Issues-Involving-BDD-or-BDD-Excluded-Claims). Guidance for scanning and uploading the VA Form 28-1900 to VBMS was added in this block. The station of origination (SOO) that received the VR&E claim is responsible for preparing the memorandum rating decision was also added to this block.

IDES Specific Topics

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

The Pre-Discharge Staff, in coordination with DoD, continues to track the HAIMS/VBMS/STRS/DBQ procedures.

* Works with VBMS, DAS and HAIMS to resolve any challenges identified
	+ Duplicate DBQs that appear as STR in the VBMS eFolder
* MSCs/Coaches should run the Pending CEST Report daily. If Military Treatment Facilities (MTF) 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
* The *HAIMS to VBMS STRs/DBQs Transfer Training Slides* on the [IDES Homepage](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/vbadod/IDES.asp) have been updated with new M21-1 references

Upcoming Conference Calls

The next BDD/IDES Call is scheduled for Tuesday, August 9, 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, July 22, 2022.

Open Floor

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

**Changing Exam Vendors in EMS**

**Question: If I requested an exam today and it goes to VES, then tomorrow the Service member submits another condition do I select EMS’s recommended vendor when inputting new exam?**

**Answer:** Select the same vendor for the open ESR, especially if SHA has not been released back to VA. When overriding, include the justification that the chosen vendor already has a pending ESR for the SHA. Place a note in the exam request itself that the vendor already has a pending ESR. If SHA has been released back to VA, any vendor may be selected.

**Question: How do we run a report for VES like we can for QTC?**

**Answer:** VES does not have the same reporting features as QTC currently.

**Question: If you call and request VES to fix an appointment that has been double-booked, I’ve been told twice now that I’m not allowed to do that, why is that?**

**Answer:** Reach out to your station [Exam Liaison](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/21/contractexams/docs/Exam%20Liaison%20Directory.xlsx) for assistance if unable to resolve over the phone. You may also email VAVBAWAS/CO/Contract Examination with ESR specifics to be answered and addressed.

Aggravation Medical Opinions (MO)

**Question: How are MSCs to prove they’ve “completed training specified by CO”.**

**Answer:** Direct AQRS to M21-1, [V.i.2.A.7.a](https://www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ssnew/help/customer/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001018/content/554400000180498/M21-1-Part-IV-Subpart-i-Chapter-2-Section-A-Examination-Requests-Overview?query=msc#7a) and if needed, to your TMS history. [Simple vs. Complex Medical Opinions](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/VBADOD/docs/IDES/SimplevsComplexMedicalOpinionsFinal.pptx) training was provided to field as part of the MSC Virtual Training 2020 sessions; additionally, TMS 1202934 & 4202061 discuss aggravation exams.

Acceptable Clinical Evidence (ACE) Exams

**Question: Must a mental health exam be conducted in-person?**

**Answer:** Per M21-1, [IV.i.3.A.1.c](https://www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ssnew/help/customer/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001018/content/554400000180514/M21-1-Part-IV-Subpart-i-Chapter-3-Section-A-General-Criteria-for-Sufficiency-of-Examination-Reports?query=tele#1c), Tele-Compensation and Pension (Tele-C&P) disability evaluations can provide accurate and fully descriptive face-to-face evaluations for VBA rating purposes through use of telehealth video technologies. In addition to C&P tele-mental health examinations, DBQs potentially suitable for being completed using clinic-based telehealth technology for disability examination purposes may be found in the [***DMA Fact Sheet 20-002,* *Telehealth for C&P Examinations***](http://vaww.demo.va.gov/factsheets.asp).

**Question: The SHA has been out there, it’s been scheduled and it has been worked, then can I use the ACE?**

**Answer:** If the in-person SHA has been completed and returned to VA, at that point the ACE may be used.

**Question: Do we order MST Medical Opinions for BDD claims?**

**Answer:** Answered in today’s call.

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

**Question: If we’re encountering incomplete/inaccurate HAIMS transfers is SAFE still an option by localities for complete IDES referral packages in lieu of HAIMS transfer?**

**Answer:** PEBLOs should be doing the same thing in HAIMS that they were doing in SAFE; verifying information for completeness and making sure all information is correct. If this is not occurring, notify this staff so we may investigate and work with our DoD partners to address.

**Question: Are the Prepare Claim Start Date (PCSD) & Claims Establishment (CEST) dates to match?**

**Answer:** It is not that the PCSD date & CEST dates should match, but the PCSD and the Date of Claim (DOC). We’re not going to delay the DOC due to technical issues. Any changes should be annotated. The PCSD is the date we have a valid referral from PEBLO and also the date we use to start the case (the DOC).

Refer to M21-1, [X.i.6.E.3](https://www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ssnew/help/customer/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001018/content/554400000177953/M21-1-Part-X-Subpart-i-Chapter-6-Section-E-Integrated-Disability-Evaluation-System-IDES-Referrals-and-Initial-Processing?query=PREPARE%20CLAIM%20START%20DATE#3).

**Question: The DOC in VBMS for an improperly referred IDES claim will be the original PCSD, correct?**

**Answer:** Correct. Refer to M21-1, [X.i.6.E.3.h.](https://www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ssnew/help/customer/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001018/content/554400000177953/M21-1-Part-X-Subpart-i-Chapter-6-Section-E-Integrated-Disability-Evaluation-System-IDES-Referrals-and-Initial-Processing?query=PREPARE%20CLAIM%20START%20DATE#3h)

**MSC/SM Interview Information about Cases that are Return to Duty (RTD)**

**Question: Do we still honor the final rating if a Soldier was on COAD for multiple years?**

**Answer:** We have requested DoD change the 12-month rule and defer all COAD cases so the case is not disenrolled and the SM will receive an IDES Final Rating.

**VTA Specific Topics**

**Question: We can’t make exit interview notes in VBMS once participant is disenrolled, is it ok to make exit comments in VBMS?**

**Answer:** Yes and on VAF 27-0820. Refer to M21-1, [X.i.6.I.3.e/f.](https://www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ssnew/help/customer/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001018/content/554400000177958/M21-1-Part-X-Subpart-i-Chapter-6-Section-I-Integrated-Disability-Evaluation-System-IDES-Processing-Based-on-Service-Department-Outcomes?query=0820#3e)

**Open Floor**

**Question: If we get a VAF 21-526EZ and a VAF 21-4138 separately attached to same email, can we consider that as one claim?**

**Answer:** We confirmed with the M21-1 staff. If a VAF 21-526EZ and a VAF 21-4138 with additional contentions is received in the same email or at the same time, we can incorporate the VAF 21-4138 contentions into the underlying claim. If we don’t receive the VAF 21-4138 at the same time or get it on a separate date, it becomes a Request for Application (RFA). Refer to M21-1, [II.iii.1.A.2.c.](https://www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ssnew/help/customer/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001018/content/554400000174869/M21-1-Part-II-Subpart-iii-Chapter-1-Section-A-Applications-for-Benefits#2c)

**Question: If VHA presents as a selection in EMS (for a Pre-Discharge claim), what do we do?**

**Answer:** We’ve heard of this occurring and have notified the respective EMS personnel of this issue. Please select a contract exam vendor such as QTC and make a system note.

**Question: We no longer manually broker to DRAS, correct?**

**Answer:** Correct. Apply the Transfer from Intake Site special issue to the first contention listed under the EP 689. Applying this special issue will transfer the claim to DRAS via automated NWQ routing. See M21-1, [X.i.6.F.3.d](https://www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ssnew/help/customer/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001018/content/554400000177955/M21-1-Part-X-Subpart-i-Chapter-6-Section-F-Integrated-Disability-Evaluation-System-IDES-Development-and-Examinations#3d) and the Required Use of New Special Issue to Replace Brokering Action topic in the [JAN22](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/VBADOD/docs/predischarge/January2022BDDIDESCallReadAheadFinal2.docx) read ahead.

**Question: Is a Secondary Action Required (SAR) in BDD?**

**Answer:** Under EP336, a SAR tracked item is not required for documenting the status of examination review, however for BDD-Excluded claims enter a SAR if examinations are not requested.

**Question: Do we need to provide PEBLOs with the VAF 21-0995?**

**Answer:** Thereis no agreed upon requirement for VA to provide DoD this Supplemental Claim document which involves a prior decision.

**Question: If the SHA has been completed and I need for some reason to order a TBI exam, may the ACE process be used.**

**Answer:** No, the ACE Process is *not* available for initial and review traumatic brain injury (TBI) examinations, however the DBQ Review Evaluation of Residuals of Traumatic Brain Injury (R-TBI) may be suitable for being completed using clinic-based telehealth technology for disability examination purposes.