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 August 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#](tel:+18727010185,,63193284# )

The R/A 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 (click the hand icon) or type it in the Teams Chat—**do not unmute to ask a question, comment or respond to questions until called upon**. Once your question/comment is addressed, lower your hand (click the hand icon again). 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

**MSC Office Hours**

MSCs and other BDD/IDES personnel are reminded that the Pre-Discharge Programs Office has established the “Pre-Discharge Policy Channel” in Teams to support MSC Office Hours. Please see the attached PPT for details.

****

**Service member (SM) Contact Info on the Exam Request**

MSCs are reminded of the importance of providing correct contact info (address, phone, email) for the SM on the Exam Request, in VBMS and other locations as needed/required. For MSCs that handle overseas cases please ensure the phone #(s) for the SM contain the country codes and can receive calls made from the US. Phone #s should be a commercial/regular, not a Defense Switched Network (DSN) #. Any additional phone/contact info can also be put in the Exam Request special instructions. We have gotten reports that the country code/other info may not populate the ESR, so verify and use the special instructions as needed.

[**PACT Act**](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.va.gov%2Fresources%2Fthe-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits%2F&data=05%7C01%7C%7C278d50d5e630486ec71008da8761462a%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637971149099643205%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=YxFin8SX39%2BPbjA5qChFXbHrPA1DKUtT%2BdY3B2Wzo8E%3D&reserved=0) **– All Pre-Discharge Claims**

*The below interim guidance will ensure Pre-Discharge claims are not prematurely denied.*

**Required Actions – Effective September 9, 2022.**

1. When a claim is received and it is related to one of the areas of the [PACT Act](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.va.gov%2Fresources%2Fthe-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits%2F&data=05%7C01%7C%7C278d50d5e630486ec71008da8761462a%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637971149099643205%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=YxFin8SX39%2BPbjA5qChFXbHrPA1DKUtT%2BdY3B2Wzo8E%3D&reserved=0), Pre-Discharge claims processors must add ***PACT*** Special Issue to each relevant PACT Act related contention(s) upon claims establishment or when the exposure contention is identified.
2. For the purposes of this Interim Guidance, a “PACT Act related claim” will be defined as a claim for a condition that the Service member (SM) explicitly claims as such, the evidence of record supports as such, or if after review of the record, the claims processor liberally construes the condition as such.
3. If Pre-Discharge claims processors still have claims in their work queue which include a [PACT Act](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.va.gov%2Fresources%2Fthe-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits%2F&data=05%7C01%7C%7C278d50d5e630486ec71008da8761462a%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637971149099643205%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=YxFin8SX39%2BPbjA5qChFXbHrPA1DKUtT%2BdY3B2Wzo8E%3D&reserved=0) contention, add the ***PACT*** Special Issueto that contention. If the claim has been routed to another RO, there is no need to request the claim back from National Work Queue (NWQ).
4. Initiate development to include gathering records and/or ordering an examination for claimed conditions to include specific exposure conditions per [M21-1, Part X, Subpart i, 6.C.1.b](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177951/M21-1-Part-X-Subpart-i-Chapter-6-Section-C-Division-of-Responsibilities-Benefits-Delivery-at-Discharge-BDD-and-BDD-Excluded-Claims#1b).
5. When requesting an examination for a PACT Act related presumptive condition, in the Examination Scheduling Request (ESR) “This is a PACT Act Claim” must be added in the Additional Information section to the contentions that are related to PACT Act. This will enable tracking of PACT Act related examinations until the necessary Exam Management System enhancements can be implemented.
6. [M21-4, Chapter 6, 4.d](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000037939/Chapter%206.%20%20Quality%20Review%20Team%20(QRT)#4d) specifically states that the 30-day calendar grace period is *only applicable* to changes made in the M21-1 as determined by the key changes document. There is no grace period associated with the guidance above. For quality review purposes, when VBA VACO issues interim guidance it supersedes the instructions found in the M21-1 or other VA procedural references.

***Note 1***: For claims that were held under the Immediate Guidance issued by OFO on August 10, 2022, the *VACO Special Issue 1* should no longer be used to hold claims. If upon review of a PACT Act claim, *VACO Special Issue 1* is still attached to any contention, it should be removed and replaced with the *PACT* special issue.

***Note 2***: PACT Act related contentions that are already service connected (i.e., claims for increase) should *not* have the *PACT* special issue applied, unless there is another potential benefit specific to the provisions of PACT Act (e.g., potential entitlement to an earlier effective date under [38 C.F.R. § 3.114](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-38/chapter-I/part-3/subpart-A/subject-group-ECFR63da83ba671b92b/section-3.114)).

Please see the complete PACT Act Interim Field Guidance Memo effective September 9, 2022. This information is available in the new PACT Act of 2022 Pre-Discharge TIP Sheet. Both of these files have been posted with this Read Ahead in the the “**2022 BDD/IDES Monthly Conference Call**” chat and in the new “**Pre-Discharge Policy”**chat.

Questions concerning this memorandum’s guidance should be directed via e-mail through station leadership to [CS\_PACTACT](mailto:vbanewcspactact@va.gov). When emailing [CS\_PACTACT](mailto:vbanewcspactact@va.gov), copy/CC either the [VAVBAWAS/CO/PREDISCHARGE](mailto:Predischarge.VBACO@va.gov) or [VAVBAWAS/CO/IDES](mailto:IDES.VBACO@VA.GOV) mailbox as appropriate.

**PTSD Claims Stressor Verification Requirements**

Per [M21-1, VIII.iv.1.A.2.g](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177468/M21-1-Part-VIII-Subpart-iv-Chapter-1-Section-A-General-Information-and-Development-for-Posttraumatic-Stress-Disorder-PTSD-Claims), if the BDD/BDD-excluded SM claimant or non-active IDES participant meets one of the below three bulleted bold requirements, no stressor development and no 0781 or 0781a is required. We are expecting to hear a final decision very soon if stressors will be required for BDD claims.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| [**VIII.iv.1.A.2.g.  When to Request Additional Evidence From the Veteran to Establish an In-Service Stressor**](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177468/M21-1-Part-VIII-Subpart-iv-Chapter-1-Section-A-General-Information-and-Development-for-Posttraumatic-Stress-Disorder-PTSD-Claims) |  | It is unnecessary to issue Section 5103 notice when a Veteran files a claim for SC for PTSD on a form that provides, or otherwise indicates the claimant received, the notice, such as [*VA Form 21-526EZ, Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits*](http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-526EZ-ARE.pdf).    Do not send the Veteran a subsequent development letter requesting credible supporting evidence to establish that an in-service stressor occurred if the evidence of record shows that   * **PTSD was initially diagnosed in service** * **a confirmed stressor is already of record, or** * **the evidence already of record establishes**   + **verified combat or former prisoner of war (FPOW) service, or**   + **service in an area of potential hostile military or terrorist activity or as a drone aircraft crew member.** |

***Important***:  Send a subsequent development letter prior to deciding the claim if the Veteran

* did not submit a completed [*VA Form 21-0781*, *Statement in Support of Claim for Service Connection for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)*](http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-0781-ARE.PDF), [*VA Form 21-0781a*, *Statement in Support of Claim for Service Connection for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Secondary to Personal Assault*](http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-0781a-ARE.pdf), or equivalent information, *and* the stressor cannot be established under the above guidelines, or
* submitted a completed stressor form or equivalent information, but did not provide sufficient details for the stressor to be corroborated.

***References***:  For more information on

* circumstances under which it is necessary to issue Section 5103 notice, see
  + [M21-1, Part III, Subpart i, 2.B](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014101/M21-1,-Part-III,-Subpart-i,-Chapter-2,-Section-B---Duty-to-Notify-Under-38-U.S.C.-5103), and
  + [M21-1, Part X, Subpart ii, 2.A.2.a](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177963/M21-1,-Part-X,-Subpart-ii,-Chapter-2,-Section-A---Revision-Based-on-Specific-Types-of-Submissions,-Including-Supplemental-Claims)
* sending a subsequent development letter for PTSD claims, see [M21-1, Part VIII, Subpart iv, 1.A.2.h](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177468/M21-1-Part-VIII-Subpart-iv-Chapter-1-Section-A-General-Information-and-Development-for-Posttraumatic-Stress-Disorder-PTSD-Claims#2h) and [i](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177468/M21-1-Part-VIII-Subpart-iv-Chapter-1-Section-A-General-Information-and-Development-for-Posttraumatic-Stress-Disorder-PTSD-Claims#2i), and required information in military sexual trauma (MST) development letters, see [M21-1, Part VIII, Subpart iv, 1.B.2.e](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177469/M21-1,-Part-VIII,-Subpart-iv,-Chapter-1,-Section-B---Development-for-Posttraumatic-Stress-Disorder-(PTSD)-Claims-Related-to-Personal-Trauma).

**Reminder: Previously Denied Issues Raised by BDD or IDES Claimants**

Per [M21-1, X.i.6.A.2.a](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177949/M21-1-Part-X-Subpart-i-Chapter-6-Section-A-Introduction-to-Pre-Discharge-Claims#2a), in order for a BDD or IDES claimant to claim a previously denied condition, they must submit it on a completed [*VA Form 20-0995, Decision Review Request: Supplemental Claim*](https://www.va.gov/find-forms/about-form-20-0995). If the SM is currently on active duty and has submitted a complete 0995, the supplemental claim issues will be listed as contentions under the pending BDD diary end product (EP) or IDES EP 689, with the *Supplemental* contention type selected as directed in [M21-1, X.i.6.A.2.b](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177949/M21-1-Part-X-Subpart-i-Chapter-6-Section-A-Introduction-to-Pre-Discharge-Claims#2a). The claim will be developed in accordance with standard IDES/BDD procedures to include examination of the conditions claimed on the 0995.

The supplemental claim will be controlled by an EP 040 upon the SM’s discharge from service in accordance with [M21-1, Part X, Subpart i, 6.A.2.c](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177949/M21-1-Part-X-Subpart-i-Chapter-6-Section-A-Introduction-to-Pre-Discharge-Claims#2c). It will be considered within BDD/IDES rating decisions in accordance with [M21-1, Part X, Subpart 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-Part-X-Subpart-i-Chapter-6-Section-A-Introduction-to-Pre-Discharge-Claims#2d).

**Tumors and Neoplasm Supplemental Language within the SHA**

On August 11, 2022, the following was distributed to the field in a Calendar blast:

“*Tumors and Neoplasm supplemental language has been added to the* [*Supplemental Language Matrix*](https://www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ssnew/help/customer/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001018/content/554400000105052/Supplemental-Language-Matrix)*. This language should be added to the ESR for the following five (5) digestive DBQs:*

* + *Esophageal Conditions DBQ*
  + *Gallbladder and Pancreas Conditions DBQ*
  + *Hepatitis, Cirrhosis, and Other Liver Conditions DBQ*
  + *Rectum and Anus Conditions DBQ, and/or*
  + *Stomach and Duodenal Conditions DBQ*

*If you have questions about the Supplemental Language Matrix, please email us at:* [*VAVBAWAS/CO/Contract Examination Inquiries*](mailto:ContractExam.VBAVACO@va.gov)*.*”

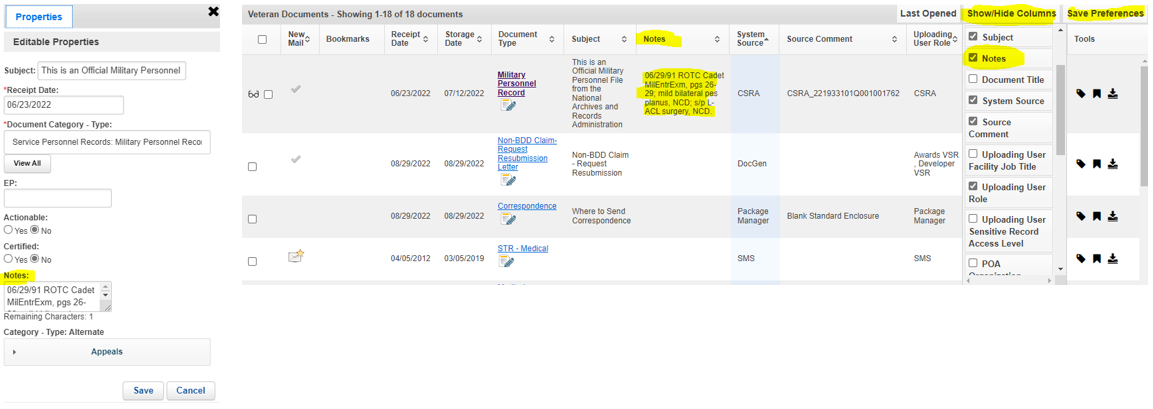
This Tumors and Neoplasm supplemental language will normally be captured within the Separation Health Assessment and not the specific digestive DBQs for Pre-Discharge claims. When ordering the SHA or any of the GENMED DBQ series, insert this supplemental language into the “Additional Information” section for the respective digestive/gastrointestinal claimed disability within the Exam Scheduling Request (ESR).

There may be instances where the needed supplemental language is required for one of the five digestive DBQs listed above to address a late flowing claimed disability. Reminder for BDD claims, per M21-1, [X.i.6.C.1.b](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?query=already#1b) “If the service member later submits additional contentions within 90 to 180 days before the anticipated discharge date, and the SHA was already completed, do not request another SHA. Request the individual exams for any contention that was not already examined.”

**VBMS’s Free Text Document Note for All Document Types**

The [VBMS Release 27.2 Release Notes](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/VBMS/docs/vbms-27-2-release-notes.docx) (8/21/22) announced that users are now able to enter a free text Document Note for all document types (**see Figure 1**) and this entry is also visible in the eFolder screen (**see Figure 2**). The claims processor can add a note of up to 100 characters to this column. To view this column, you will have to add to your eFolder screen using the Show/Hide Columns functionality.

**Figure1: Figure 2:**



For more information, go to the [VBMS Resources](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/VBMS/resources.asp) website or the [VBMS Online Help System](https://www.vbms.vba.va.gov/vbmsp2/resources_p4/webhelp/core_webhelp/welcome.htm). If end users experience any issues with a new VBMS release, please submit a ticket to OI&T through [YourIT](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fyourit.va.gov%2F&data=05%7C01%7C%7C02c6d4e0109d4aeb8a4f08da820adf49%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637965280447055450%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=%2BnZOiJ7XwDn%2FfO7BlyhRxwvAyvo2y1hUvZr1lk2FIgs%3D&reserved=0).

**Reminder:** Claims processors must continue to ensure to properly annotate or bookmark documents within the eFolder per M21-1, [II.ii.2.A.1.h](https://www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ssnew/help/customer/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001018/content/554400000174866/M21-1-Part-II-Subpart-ii-Chapter-2-Section-A-Folder-Maintenance?query=bookmark#1h), [IV.i.2.A.8.e](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=tabbing#8e) and [IV.i.2.A.8 f](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=tabbing#8f).

**MSC SharePoint Site**

MSC Coaches/Supervisors are reminded to keep their BDD and IDES info updated on the MSC SP Site.

Contact [Andrew.Reese@va.gov](mailto:Andrew.Reese@va.gov) if needed.

[Pre-Discharge Programs MSC Info (SharePoint)](https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/VBA21C212/212D_MSC_Info/SitePages/Home.aspx)

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
  + Still working to get accomplished-Target Date October 16, 2022.
* 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](mailto:VAVBAWAS/CO/IDES%20%3cIDES.VBACO@VA.GOV%3e)
* 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

**Letter User Interface (UI)**

On July 28, 2022, the Office of Field Operations (OFO) announced the release of the new Letter User Interface (UI) functionality within VBMS-Core with an effective date of July 31, 2022. On August 21, 2022, there was an update to the functionality to include the list of letters below.

To assist users with this transition, a demonstration of the new functionality is available for all users within **TMS (Letter Creator in VBMS, TMS# 4629414**). Additionally, we have attached a **job aid** and you can find a **quick instructional video** at the following link: [https://web.microsoftstream.com/video/8e03cd02-f0d3-4b37-8f06-b8e76b8e31a0?list=studio](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fweb.microsoftstream.com%2Fvideo%2F8e03cd02-f0d3-4b37-8f06-b8e76b8e31a0%3Flist%3Dstudio&data=05%7C01%7C%7Cc9b5994beef64854955908da853b536f%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637968787090029877%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=e6RK4baNOzKlb9GmRwxW83MDd%2BFlWGqoBbCQhA9w8%2FQ%3D&reserved=0)



The following letters are now available:

• Active ITF Notification

• IDES Return to Active Service

• Incorrectly Established Claim

• Exam Appointment

• Withdrawal of Claim (Comp/Pension)

• Suspension of Claim Due to Return to Active Duty

• IDES Benefits Estimate

• Character of Discharge Notification Letter

• Earlier Effective Date Letter

• Pre-Determination Hearing Letter

• Returned Mail Letter

• Request for Application AMA Review

• Fugitive Felon Due Process Letter

• Request for Application Compensation Pension or DIC

• Fugitive Felon Final Notification Letter

• General Records Request (Non-Medical)

• PA/FOIA Final Response

• PA/FOIA Acknowledgement letter

• PA/FOIA No Folder Established

• PA/FOIA No Record

• PA/FOIA VA Exam

• PA/FOIA No Judge Signature

• PA/FOIA No Signature

• No Exclusive Contact to Veteran

• Travel Board Video Conference

• DRO Process Explanation

• Request for Application - Dependency

• Annual Clothing Allowance Letter

• Request for Application – Helpless Child

Upcoming Conference Calls

The next BDD/IDES Call is scheduled for Tuesday, October 11, 2022, at 2PM ET. Please submit IDES questions and proposed topics for discussion to the [IDES Mailbox](mailto:VAVBAWAS/CO/IDES%20%3cIDES.VBACO@VA.GOV%3e), and BDD questions and proposed topics for discussion to the [BDD Mailbox](mailto:VAVBAWAS/CO/PREDISCHARGE%20%3cPredischarge.VBACO@va.gov%3e) no later than close of business (COB), Friday, September 23, 2022.

Open Floor

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

**Question: If there is already a diagnosis or a combat decoration, are we still required to have them provide the VA Form 21-0781/VA Form 21-0781a?**

**Answer:** Specified combat decorations and other credible supporting evidence that the Veteran engaged in combat does not require 0781 per [M21-1, VIII.iv.1.A.2.g](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177468/M21-1-Part-VIII-Subpart-iv-Chapter-1-Section-A-General-Information-and-Development-for-Posttraumatic-Stress-Disorder-PTSD-Claims). See the above topic entitled, “PTSD Claims Stressor Verification Requirements” above for further information.

**Question: Why would we need to go to the Exam Liaison for delays in exam scheduling and delayed releases? Currently, we are required to complete weekly reports on the statuses and outliers for IDES cases.**

Answer: Per MDEO, calling the vendor is restricted by contract and in many cases the information can be found in EMS or the exam portal. However, you can call the vendor, but you may or may not get an answer. If you have cases that have been pending release for an extended amount of time and a review of the exam portal or EMS does not provide you answers, please send to the contract exam mailbox and cc the appropriate IDES or BDD mailbox.

**Question: As far as quality goes, would it be an error to leave the Gulf War Presumptive-Airborne Hazards if it was determined to be not applicable.**

**Answer:** if “determined to be not applicable”, remove the *Gulf War Presumptive – Airborne Hazards* Special Issue. The AUG22 Read Ahead provided the following:

“[M21-1, III.i.2.F.2.e.](https://www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ssnew/help/customer/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001018/content/554400000046277/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-i-Chapter-2-Section-F-Record-Maintenance-During-the-Development-Process?query=Agent%20Orange%20-%20Vietnam%20special%20issue#2e) instructs: “**Special issues indicators may need to be updated throughout the life of a claim.** It is important that claims processors are vigilant in identifying when the circumstances of the claim require the addition, **removal**, or editing of special issue indicators.”

NOTE: Please also ensure compliance with current interim OFO guidance (below) regarding recent changes based on the [PACT Act](https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits/), to include Special Issue assignments.

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**Question: When we submit exam requests, we’re required to put our contact information in the request. I have received emails from QTC advising of no-shows, however, with LHI and VES, we’re not getting any notifications at all. Are the vendors required to contact us or was QTC going above and beyond?**

**Answer**: Your contact information is for the vendor to contact you in the event the have a specific question the day of the examination. They have no requirement to submit information to an individual employee or anyone outside the actual core of the contract. The requirement for them is to provide information via EMS and through their portal where messaging of any sort is sent back and forth.

**Question:** **Do you have to wait until the exam request is accepted by the vendor before releasing the exam from your queue (BDD)?**

**Answer**: IAW X.i.6.C.1.d. - ***Important***: Do not wait until examinations have been accepted in EMS to change the EP 336 to the rating EP. Rejected examinations will route to an RO to address the examination issue.

**NOTE**: This current practice is under review to determine the best practice.