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 November 2022 Call are in Appendix 1. The TMS # for this month’s call will be provided during the call and will be active about a week after the call. 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 about 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

**New Version of VA Form 21-526EZ**

There is a new version of the [VA Form 21-526EZ](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/20/cio/20s5/forms/VBA-21-526EZ-ARE.pdf) dated November 2022. Please ensure you are using this version moving forward.

**Emails to Pre-Discharge Mailboxes (BDD and IDES) and Subject Lines**

When sending emails to the Pre-Discharge (BDD and IDES) Mailboxes, please use the below Subject Line format: Program: Issue/reason for email.

Ex: BDD: Exam Delay or IDES: Claim 29 Palms

The body of the email should be specific and contain as much info needed for the staff to understand the issue/question in order to reply

**QTC GovDelivery Alert and International Claimants**

On the [January 2022](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/VBADOD/docs/predischarge/January2022BDDIDESCallReadAheadFinal2.docx) monthly BDD and IDES Conference call we announced that the Medical Disability Examination Office (MDEO) successfully began using the GovDelivery system to contact Veterans/Service members via email concerning scheduled Compensation and Pension (C&P) examinations. The current GovDelivery alert from QTC also references potential communication from [International SOS](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjPkfevuoj8AhUzLVkFHSvDD0kQFnoECBAQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.internationalsos.com%2F&usg=AOvVaw0E_9ll9fLNzR352JcljJAm) (ISOS), along with their contact information for those living internationally who require an examination (see **Figure 1**). Please assure your participants know that ISOS is a valid entity associated with the examination process. For issues with ISOS, contact your local [Exam Liaison](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/21/MDEO/docs/dao/Exam%20Liaison%20Directory.xlsx) who can reach out to MDEO if needed. Kindly CC either the [BDD](mailto:predischarge.vbaco@va.gov) or [IDES](mailto:ides.vbaco@va.gov) Mailboxes as appropriate.

**Figure 1**

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BDD Specific Topics

**BDD-Excluded PTSD Claims Development including MST**

Effective December 16, 2022, all active-duty claimants that submit a claim for PTSD including MST with one to 180 days remaining on active duty are no longer required to provide a stressful incident/stressor statement(s) in support of their PTSD claim, including VA Form 21-0781 and 21-0781a, when submitting their BDD or BDD-excluded claim. There is no change to IDES PTSD stressor guidance.

The BDD PTSD development requirements guidance on the [Compensation Service Interim Guidance](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/21/rating/guidance.htm) and [BDD](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/vbadod/predischarge.asp) intranet pages have been updated to include BDD-excluded claims in this guidance. This guidance can be found in the “What’s New” box on the [BDD](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/vbadod/predischarge.asp) intranet page. This guidance update has been submitted to be published in [M21-1, X.i.6.B.3.g](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#3g).

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

VBMS Release deployed December 11, 2022, included auto- archiving duplicate DBQs from HAIMS/DAS. DBQs labeled as STRs that are being sent back from HAIMS via a DAS push will automatically be stored in the archived section of the eFolder. This is a time-saving enhancement as, MSCs/VSRs and RVSRs no longer need to open and archive these duplicate documents.

During the first week of the release, it appears that the archiving of new documents will create a “New Mail” indicator seen in user’s Work Queue. However, when users go into the case’s Documents Tab they will not see the new mail there. Once the user opens all the New Mail in the Archive Bin then the New Mail indicator in work queue will go away. Our staff will continue to monitor this issue and will provide updates as they become available.

* 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

**Use of VA Form 21-4138 and VA Form 21-526EZ**

MSCs must use the new 21-526 EZ, revision date November 2022, which was issued on 12/28/22. The new 21-526 states, if more space is needed, please make additional copies of this page to submit with the application. MSCs should be using the additional copies when SM needs more space for adding contentions. For initial interviews that were conducted prior to the issue of the new-21-526 EZ, use of VA Form 21-4138 and prior version of the VA Form 21-526EZ will be appropriate. VA Form 21-4138 may be used to continue the 21-526EZ when additional space is needed to list claimed conditions; however, for conditions listed on the 21-4138 to be considered a VA claim, the 21-4138 must be submitted along with the 21-526EZ. If the participant would like to claim any additional issues after the VA Form 21-526EZ was initially submitted, the participant must complete and submit a new VA Form 21-526EZ. It has been indicated that in some instances, MSCs are accepting the 21-4138 and attaching it to a 21-526 EZ, where the contentions area is blank. Referred and claimed conditions should be listed on the 21-526 EZ, If additional space is needed, MSCs must use additional copies as noted with the new 21-526EZ.

**Return of VA Form 21-526EZ and list of examinations requested to Physical Evaluation Board Liaison Officer (PEBLO)**

MSCs are reminded that IDES participants must complete a VA Form 21-526EZ to initiate a claim for VA Benefits. Per [M21-1, Part X, Subpart i, 6.F.2](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177955/M21-1,-Part-X,-Subpart-i,-Chapter-6,-Section-F---Integrated-Disability-Evaluation-System-(IDES)-Development-and-Examinations#2), MSCs must return a copy of the completed VA Form 21-526 EZ (or notice that the participant declined to submit a VA claim, if applicable), and a list of examinations requested.

**MSCs Must Ensure Completeness of C&P Examination Reports**

While DRAS’ must determine whether examinations are sufficient for rating purposes, MSCs should ensure that examinations are complete before entering the Medical Evaluation End Date in VTA. MSCs should ensure that all requested DBQs have been completed by the examiner. Further, MSCs should ensure that specific testing required by the DBQs has been provided (such as range of motion, pulmonary function tests, radiography reports). In cases where DBQs (or specific elements required by the DBQ) are found to be missing from an IDES examination report, MSCs should obtain the missing information by contacting the exam provider before entering the MEED in VTA which notifies the PEBLO exams are available in HAIMS. DRAS’ continue to be responsible for determining the sufficiency of exams for rating purposes after the Medical Evaluation End Date has been entered in VTA. For more information regarding actions MSCs must take once all exam reports are complete, see [M21-1.X.i.6.F.3.c.](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177955/M21-1,-Part-X,-Subpart-i,-Chapter-6,-Section-F---Integrated-Disability-Evaluation-System-(IDES)-Development-and-Examinations)

**Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act Implementation Standard Operating Procedure (SOP v1.0) and PACT Act Inquiry Tool**

The [PACT Act Implementation SOP (v1.0)](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/21/PACT%20Act%20Implementation%20SOP%20v.1.pdf) went into effect on January 1, 2023. Please familiarize yourself with this and other important PACT Act resources which may be found on the on the Compensation Service [PACT Act Information Page](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/21/pact.htm). Our staff has created a PACT Act Guidance Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) which is currently undergoing concurrence. These FAQs will apply to the SOP and PACT Act resources. Some SOP highlights:

* Active-duty pre-discharge claims should not be considered under the PACT Act unless the claimed condition is from a prior period of active duty that could be associated with the provisions of the PACT Act. If a pre-discharge claimant has a prior period of qualifying service or is a non-active-duty Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) participant, PACT Act provisions may apply. See page 4 of SOP.
* Toxic Exposure Risk Activity (TERA) procedures do not apply to active-duty pre-discharge claims, unless the claim is for a prior period of active duty. If a pre-discharge claimant has a prior period of qualifying service or is a non-active-duty IDES participant, TERA provisions may apply. See pages 11 and 13 of SOP.

Compensation Service has also launched a [PACT Act Inquiry Tool](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fdvagov.sharepoint.com%2Fsites%2FVBA21CPACTACT%2FInquiry%2FSitePages%2FPACTActHome.aspx%3FOR%3DTeams-HL%26CT%3D1672845558039%26clickparams%3DeyJBcHBOYW1lIjoiVGVhbXMtRGVza3RvcCIsIkFwcFZlcnNpb24iOiIyNy8yMjExMzAwNDEwMCIsIkhhc0ZlZGVyYXRlZFVzZXIiOmZhbHNlfQ%253d%253d&data=05%7C01%7C%7Cc8cd2cf66f564cdd443f08daee67de2b%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C638084427111647200%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=OjieBEQwlddAoQE%2F1km%2BQ2R87UYl1RkjT4DyH%2FHnN0s%3D&reserved=0). The tool’s link is found at the bottom of the [PACT Act Information Page](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/21/pact.htm). The primary purpose of the PACT Act Inquiry Tool is to provide the field a direct communication link to VBA for guidance and questions. Currently, inquiries will be submitted by Directors (Assistant Directors) or Division Level Leadership (Veteran Service Center Managers (VSCM), and Assistant VSCMs (AVSCM), etc.) when questions from the field cannot be addressed at the Regional Office (RO) level. Additionally, inquiries will be reviewed and compiled to update PACT Act resources as needed.

Stations are to utilize and exhaust all local resources (e.g., PACT Act Subject Matter Experts, local Quality Review Team, PACT Act Information Page) prior to using the PACT Act Inquiry Tool. RO’s are to develop local procedures for submitting and tracking questions using the PACT Act Inquiry Tool. Employees should work with their direct supervisor to submit questions through the PACT Act Inquiry Tool.

Handling Cases Involving Pregnant IDES Participants

MSCs are reminded to follow [M21-1.X.i.6.K.](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000177960/M21-1,-Part-X,-Subpart-i,-Chapter-6,-Section-K---Special-Situations-Related-to-Integrated-Disability-Evaluation-System-(IDES)#3) (Topic 3) when an IDES SM is pregnant.

Upcoming Conference Calls

The next BDD/IDES Call is scheduled for Tuesday, February 14, 2023, 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), Monday, January 23, 2023.

Open Floor

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

**Question:** Are we to open documents that are associated with the other claims that other VSR or Raters are working?

**Answer**: The “New Mail indicator,” should be cleared on all documents upon completion of initial development. All subsequent new documents should be opened and reviewed for relevant information. This action should be completed by any employee handling the eFolder. See [M21-1, II.ii.2.A.1.a](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=%22New%20mail%22#1a).

**Question:** Will we still have to put the Fully Developed Claim (FDC) flash (sic) in Veterans Benefits Management System (VMBS)?

**Answer**: Upon receipt of a FDC claim, the FDC special issue indicator will be assigned to ***at least one contention*** within the FDC claim. Reminder: BDD claims do not require an ***FDC exclusion*** special issue indicator. See [M21-1, X.i.2.B.1.a](https://www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ssnew/help/customer/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001018/content/554400000177941/M21-1,-Part-X,-Subpart-i,-Chapter-2,-Section-B---Processing-Fully-Developed-Claims-(FDCs)#1) & [d](https://www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ssnew/help/customer/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001018/content/554400000177941/M21-1,-Part-X,-Subpart-i,-Chapter-2,-Section-B---Processing-Fully-Developed-Claims-(FDCs)#2d).

**Question:** Did you all get the e-mail today for the Personal Trauma [Development Checklist](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/21/rating/rat06h.htm) and [Incident/Marker Worksheet](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/21/rating/rat06h.htm)?

**Answer**: No, this staff did not receive such an email. Reminder: when processing an active-duty IDES or BDD or Benefits Delivery at Discharge for Military Sexual Trauma (MST) the above checklist/worksheet are not required. See [M21-1, VIII.iv.1.B.1.d](https://www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ssnew/help/customer/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001018/content/554400000177469/M21-1-Part-VIII-Subpart-iv-Chapter-1-Section-B-Development-for-Posttraumatic-Stress-Disorder-PTSD-Claims-Related-to-Personal-Trauma?query=PTSD#1d).

**Question:** Does Veterans Tracking Application (VTA) affect whether or not a form is uploaded into VBMS?

**Answer**: No, there is no communication between VBMS and VTA.

**Question:** LHI cancelled an appointment for an IDES Service member who had to attend chemotherapy (good cause) for the referred issue. Is that good customer service?

**Answer**: MDEO replied that the contractor cannot do anything except cancel that appointment. Proper next step is to re-input exam request and appointment will be scheduled.

**Question:** Have you thought about doing MSC training, apart from BDD?

**Answer**: The Pre-Discharge Programs staff is planning to have MSC and Supervisor training this fiscal year.

**Question:** If we get a claim for ear rupture, do we need to add the Hearing Loss and Tinnitus DBQ? Or for TMJ, do we add the Oral and Dental DBQ?

**Answer**: Claims for ear rupture or TMJ will be addressed by the Separation Health Assessment (SHA). Use [Index of DBQ/Exams by Disability](http://vbacoweb03.dva.va.gov/bl/21/DBQ/DBQByDisab.asp?SearchString=drum) to assist in selecting best DBQs.

**Question:** Can you cancel an individual contention?

**Answer**: Yes. See [VBMS Help](https://www.vbms.vba.va.gov/vbmsp2/resources_p4/webhelp/core_webhelp/vbms/claim_development/exams/exam_activity.htm?rhsearch=cancel&rhhlterm=cancelled%20cancellation%20canceled%20cancel):

**Contention Activity**

Contentions associated with an exam scheduling request may be cancelled by EMS or deleted in an application outside of VBMS. Contentions may also be edited from the Contentions List tab after being added to a request.

**Question:** Lately I've noticed some IDES cases taking maybe a month or two longer than the 30-day goal after discharge; are we seeing a backlog on finalizations.?

**Answer**: Yes, there is a backlog that is being worked through to include the challenges of receiving DD Form 214s or being notified of separation from some branches of service. The DRAS’s are working as hard as they can to provide timely benefits. Please inform your IDES participant that the goal for the VA Benefit stage is 30 days processing time for Active Duty. See [M21-1, X.i.6.E.1.j.](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=goal#1j)

**Question:** Do we order an Oral and Dental DBQ for bruxism claims?

**Answer**: If bruxism is claimed, it must be listed in the contentions in VBMS and listed in the VA examination request. However, do not request an Oral and Dental DBQ. Bruxism will be examined under the SHA DBQ for BDD claims and IDES referrals or the GENMED exam for BDD-excluded claims.

Add this note to examiner on the SHA exam request: *If bruxism is found on exam, please provide the etiology of the bruxism, and complete any additional DBQs needed to evaluate the underlying disability.*