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 from the August 2024 Call are in Appendix 1. The TMS # for this month’s call will be provided during the call and a Calendar Blast will notify the field when the TMS # is active.

**Call-in Information (New beginning Feb 2024)**

Microsoft Teams meeting

[Click here to join the meeting](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3Ameeting_N2I0Y2MxMmItZjI3Ni00NmFkLWFjOTMtMWM1YmUzNzQwYWE5%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)

Meeting ID: 228 636 845 446
Passcode: oJhBDy

**Or call in (audio only)**

+1 872-701-0185,,205533754#

Phone Conference ID: 205 533 754#

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 [Calendar Subscriptions (va.gov)](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fvbacoweba5.vba.va.gov%2Fbl%2F21%2FCalendar%2Fcal_Subscribe.asp&data=05%7C01%7C%7C21879ad3ed524078df7108dbb3930978%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C638301216315397959%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=IblMTyApGDJdc7op5Ca6KMk320%2FdtSPPk7tkR9h7IvM%3D&reserved=0) to receive notification that monthly R/A’s are available, TMS numbers are active and other VA info that might be relevant/important to you.

General Topics for Discussion

**Call Rules and Expectations**

1. The Pre-Discharge Staff is committed to ensure MSCs and other field personnel have accurate and up-to-date information regarding BDD and IDES policy and procedures.
2. The call is being recording and transcribed for training purposes and will be posted in TMS.
3. You are expected to conduct yourself in a professional courteous manner to include refraining from inappropriate language and comments.
4. Pre-approval by our staff is required before anyone provides guidance/updates/other info that is related to BDD or IDES.
5. Do not forward the invite or Read Ahead to or invite non-VA employees.

Preferred Gender of Dr. by SM

Gender preferences of doctors, if identified or verbalized by the SM must be respected and noted in the exam request. An MSC should not tell a vendor to not accommodate the request. Noting the requested gender can cut down on delays. If the vendor knows a preferred gender (if one), they can schedule it accordingly, instead of not knowing and having to reschedule.

**New Pre-Discharge Consolidated Email Box**

The Pre-Discharge Staff (219) has established a new consolidated email box for all BDD and IDES inquiries. The address is VAVBAWAS/CO/219/PREDISCHARGE PROGRAMS (219PreDisPrograms.vbaco@va.gov). This new box is effective October 1, 2024. Until then continue to use the IDES Mailbox and BDD Mailbox. An automatic reply will be sent from the two current boxes beginning 1 October telling users to re-send to the new box. When sending an email to this box ensure you put BDD or IDES (along with other text as needed) in the Subject Line and details in the body. This box is VA only. Do not distribute the address to non-VA personnel and do not include DoD personnel in emails to the new box.

Again, use current boxes until October 1.

**Exam Issues/Concerns/Reminders and Who to Contact**

MSCs are reminded even though exams are a part of the BDD/IDES process, the Pre-Discharge Staff is not the appropriate office to answer most questions about exam delays/issues/billing and/or the exam vendor. These emails should be sent to VAVBAWAS/CO/Contract Examination Inquiries and Cc the IDES Mailbox and BDD Mailbox until October 1 and VAVBAWAS/CO/219/PREDISCHARGE PROGRAMS on/after October 1. The Exam Staff will need a claim # or Exam UUID. Additionally, the Subject line should specify if inquiry is a BDD or IDES claim (exam, SHA Part A, other) and the body should be clearly written with details needed to answer the inquiry.

BDD Topics for Discussion

**Entering and Verifying Service Information for Active Duty Service Members**

Claims processors are reminded that when establishing BDD and BDD-excluded claims for a SM, the MILITARY SERVICEtab in VBMS must accurately reflect the SM’s current branch of service, date of entry into active duty and the future release from active duty (RAD). The SERVICE VERIFIED box must **not** be marked as verified. The current period of service must not be marked as verified until the SM has been discharged, **and** VA has received verification of the SM’s separation date and character of discharge.

***Note***: VA may receive a DD Form 214 while the SM is still on active duty (prior to the RAD); however, even in these instances, the period of service should not be marked as verified in VBMS before the SM’s discharge date. Service should be marked as verified on or after the RAD in accordance with [M21-1, III.i.1.B.2.a (Verifying Service and COD)](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000181425/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-i-Chapter-1-Section-B-Service-Requirements-and-Verification-of-Eligibility?query=verifying%20service%20and%20cod) and as noted in [M21-1, X.i.6.C.3.d (Important Items to Consider When Rating BDD Claims)](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). BDD claims are rated while the SM is still on active duty. The current period of service will not be verified until on or after discharge. These claims must not be deferred for service verification.

IDES Topics for Discussion

**United States Coast Guard (USCG) Implementation into IDES**

Approximately five years ago, Department of Veteran Affairs (VA), Pre-Discharge Programs Staff and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), United States Coast Guard (USCG) agreed to pilot USCG cases into IDES. During the pilot, all IDES USCG referrals were sent to the National Capital Region Benefits Office (NCRBO) for MSC claim development and the Providence DRAS for rating activity. The Pre-Discharge Staff requested approval to assign/centralize USCG IDES work to a Regional Office (RO), and the Office of Field Operations (OFO) approved the request.

**Effective October 1, 2024*,* all claim development (IDES referrals/MSC work) and rating activity (proposed and final ratings) will be completed at the Providence DRAS.**

There will be more coordination to follow. If you have questions, please send to the IDES Mailbox and BDD Mailbox until October 1 and VAVBAWAS/CO/219/PREDISCHARGE PROGRAMS on/after October 1.

**Seattle DRAS Reminders to MSCs (686c and 0819)**

1. 686c – We are still seeing outdated 686c’s. MSCs should delete all saved copies of the September 2018 form. Alternatively, we know that if it’s from va.gov that is acceptable.
2. 0819 – DRAS is seeing 0819s that are not signed completely. Please ensure the form is signed.

Date of 526EZ on Benefits Estimate Letter (BEL)

When completing the BEL, DRAS claims processors are prompted to enter the “Date of 526EZ.” This date entered in this field should match the date of receipt of the VA Form 21-526EZ—not the date of the 21-0819.

VTA Topics for Discussion

**VTA Inputs and Exit Interviews**

DoD is now requiring **all** cases (completed IDES, RTD, disenrolled for other reasons) have a Final Disposition, Final Disposition Date (which populates the Exit Interview Start Date) and Exit Interview data before disenrolling a case. DoD has Instructed PEBLOs to not request disenrollment—and DoD should not approve disenrollment—until a case meets this criterion. It is critical for MSCs to conduct Exits (Completed/not Completed) ASAP so the case can be disenrolled. MSCs should run Pending Exit Interview Report at least once a week.

**Updating MSC Assigned**

Coaches and MSCs are reminded that when an MSC leaves and has “Open” cases where an Exit Interview has not been completed, the cases need to be re-assigned. This is very important as it keeps MSC contact info up to date for SMs and others who may need to contact the MSC. If the case has an Exit Interview, it does not need to be re-assigned.

Upcoming Conference Calls

The next BDD/IDES Call is scheduled for **Tuesday, October 8**, 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), Thursday September 26.

Open Floor

**Appendix 1: Call Notes from the August 2024 BDD/IDES Conference Call**

**Question**: Are exit interviews no longer required to be done either over the phone or in person, so can an email can be sent instead of a call?

**Answer**: Exit interviews continue to be required in person or by phone. Please make two attempts to contact via these means. If you still cannot reach the SM, please document on an 0820 that you were unable to contact the SM.

**Question**: Has the document type changed for the SHA Part A self-assessment?

**Answer**: No, the document type has not changed. It needs to be listed as DBQ - SHA Part A, instead of VA Examination.

**Question**: Will there be training on this MST letters soon?

**Answer**: Information on policies and training was sent from OFO to MSC coaches.

**Question**: Sometimes SHA’s are being mislabeled and come across intermingled with STR’s. Is 219 aware of this happening?

**Answer**: Yes, 219 is aware that this has been an issue, and it was an issue with the Central Mail scanning vendors. If you come across examples of this, please email the Pre-Discharge box with specific claim numbers so that we can work with Central Mail on this issue.

**Question:** Can you please confirm how we put contentions from the 526 into VBMS?

**Answer:** Per [M21-1, III.i.2.F.2.a (Identifying Contentions)](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=contentions#2a), enter contentions the same as the claimant listed them on the 526. Hearing loss and tinnitus should be entered as two separate contentions. If clarification is needed, contact the SM to clarify what they are claiming.

**Question**: Are we still required to send the PEBLO a weekly exams status report?

**Answer**: That is at the discretion of local station procedural guidance. It is a courtesy not a requirement.

**Question**: Does the MST letter apply to pre-discharge claims or not?

**Answer:** Please comply with the guidance that has been set forth. Until or unless we hear differently, all MST claims will have the VHA Memo.

**Question**: There has been a low accuracy rate of dates being entered into VTA by MSC’s. The quality IQR’s seem incongruent to the data. Is anything being done about this?

**Answer**: The general rule is that we don’t open cases for re-entry of data. If you have a specific case where there is a question about accuracy of the dates, please send to the VSRT box and we can look at the situation.