

Training Coordinator's Module Guide for Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)



November 5, 2013

Table of Contents

Section 1 - Introduction	1-1
Introduction	1-1
Module Overview	1-2
Who Will Take This Module?	1-2
Module Map	1-3
TPSS Materials	1-6
TPSS Equipment	1-6
DIC Test Design	1-7
Module Pretest	1-7
Lesson Posttests	1-7
Module Posttest	1-9
Death Rating Template and TPSS Rating Text	1-10
Publications	1-10
Contact Information	1-11
Section 2 - Module Master Planning Chart	2-1
Section 3 - Lesson Summaries	3-1

Section 1 - Introduction
Training Coordinator's Module Guide for
Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

Section 1 - Introduction

Introduction

Welcome to the *Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)* Module of the Basic Ratings Training and Performance Support System (TPSS). Due to the length of the module title, future references are shortened to *Original Claim for DIC* or simply *DIC Module*. Please read this Module Guide in its entirety. Feel free to highlight certain portions or write down notes as you read through this document.

Within these pages, you will find the information you need to set up and implement this course successfully.

Section 1 includes an introduction to this module, including Module Overview and Module Map; and a list of the specific resources required to support this training module.

Section 2 contains the Module Master Planning Chart which lays out the instructional activities and course events including time and resource requirements.

Section 3 contains summaries for each of the lessons in this module. Use this information to familiarize yourself with the module contents and also as a review for your students before they complete the posttests.

Remember: To evaluate student performance and answer any student questions, you must either:

- (1) Be thoroughly familiar with the task: *Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)*, or
- (2) Identify the Subject Matter Expert (SME) to whom you may refer any specific technical or task-related questions. Ensure this person is available to provide any one-on-one training and/or feedback that are necessary.

Section 1 - Introduction

Training Coordinator's Module Guide for *Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)*

Module Overview

This module is entitled *Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)*. This module is part of the Basic Ratings Course. It contains the following seven custom-designed, computer-based lessons with several online case-based interactive training exercises:

- Lesson 1** - Verify Requirements for Rating
- Lesson 2** - Principles of Service Connection for Cause of Death
- Lesson 3** - Determine Service Connection for Cause of Death I
- Lesson 4** - Determine Service Connection for Cause of Death II
- Lesson 5** - Determine Additional Evidence Requirements and Responses
- Lesson 6** - Ancillary Benefits/ Confirm Duty to Assist (DTA)
- Lesson 7** - Prepare the Rating Decision

Who Will Take This Module?

The target population for this module consists of entry level RVSRs, usually with several years of experience in Adjudication. However, the recent trend in hiring for RVSRs has expanded the base to include individuals from service and other ancillary organizations. Therefore, while some of these individuals will be familiar with reviewing Veterans' claim files, many will not have any experience with the rating process.

Students taking the *DIC Module* should have completed the Prerequisite Training Course or its equivalent.

Note: The Prerequisite Training Course, which covers medical terminology and the Rating Schedule, is not graded. Students should complete this course, or a local office equivalent, prior to taking the Basic Ratings Course.

All students selected to take this module should complete each lesson from start to finish in sequence, to ensure that he/she has or gains a comprehensive understanding of rating an original claim for DIC.

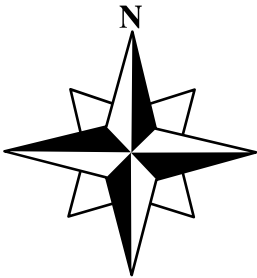
Section 1 - Introduction

Training Coordinator's Module Guide for *Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)*

Students who take this module should have either failed the DIC Module Pretest or opted not to take the DIC Module Pretest prior to training.

Note: Taking the module pretest is optional. Students who want to take the *Original DIC Module* may choose to take the test, or they may choose to go directly to the lessons.

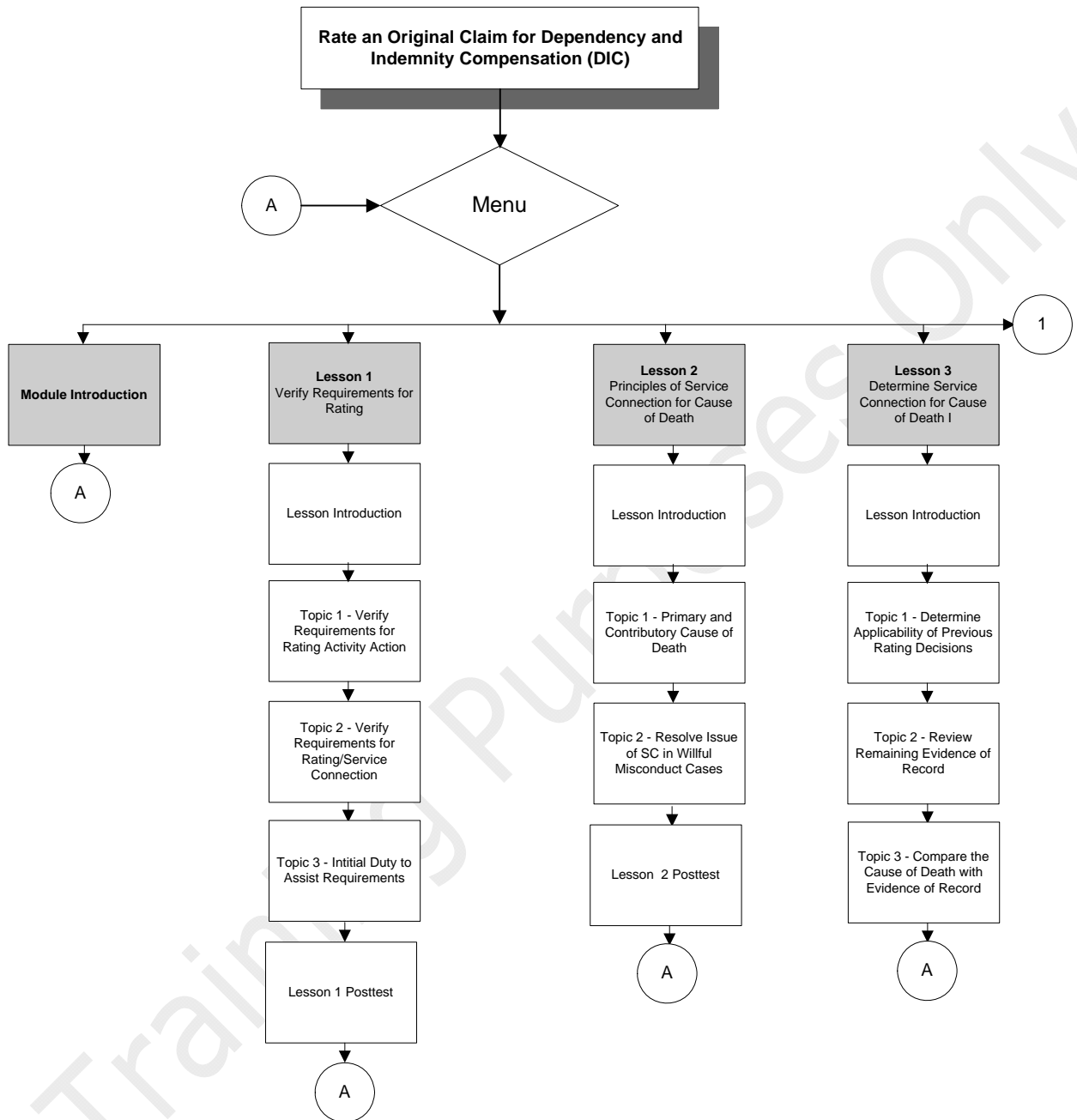
Module Map



To get an overview of how the module is laid out, take a look at the Module Map that follows.

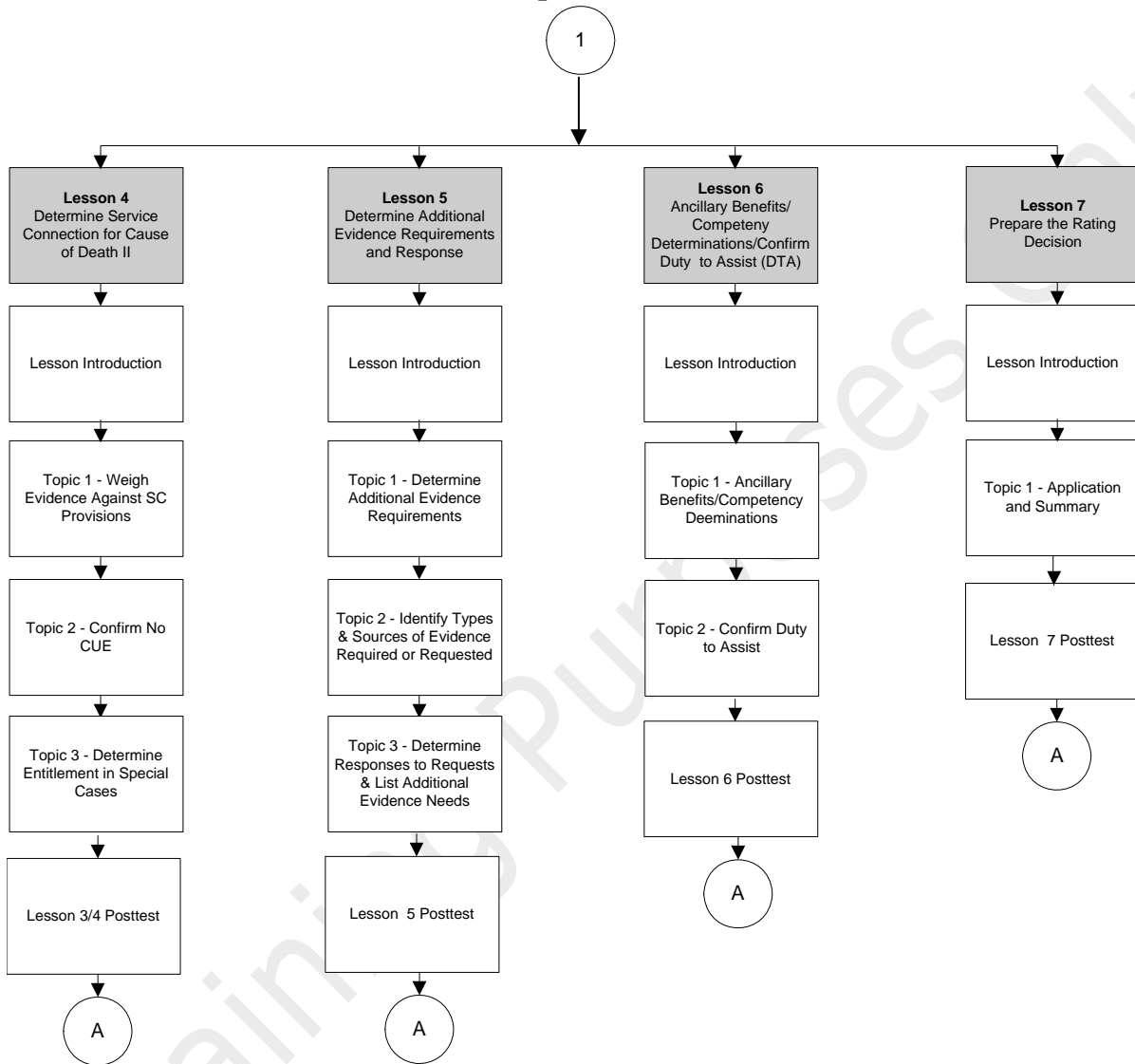
As you can see, the *DIC Module* is comprised of seven lessons. The students must take the lessons in the order they are presented. A student may not proceed to the next lesson until they have successfully completed the previous lesson's posttest (except for Lesson 3 which has no posttest).

Section 1 - Introduction
 Training Coordinator's Module Guide for
Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)



Section 1 - Introduction
Training Coordinator's Module Guide for
Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

Module Map (Continued)



Section 1 - Introduction

Training Coordinator's Module Guide for *Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)*

TPSS Materials

Everything that your students need to complete the *DIC Module* is available to them within the module online. Once you provide the students with a proper briefing, your role, other than monitoring their progress throughout and conducting test briefings, will be to score the test answer sheets that they print from the system and give them feedback.

You can access the test scoring instructions and answer keys from the VBA Learning Catalog, where you found this Module Guide. Search for TMS Item #1380383.

TPSS Equipment



Dual Monitors

The computers for the students should be set up with dual monitors so that they can open the online cases and look at other reference material during the training and testing.

In the Module Introduction, the students are provided with the following information about opening instructional cases with or without dual monitors:

“As you work your way through the lessons, you will use online cases that are based on actual Veterans' cases which have been altered for training purposes and to protect the privacy of the individuals involved with the claim.

You will access these online cases by clicking the Cases button in the upper part of the screen.

- If you have dual monitors, when you select a case using the button, it will open in a new window. You may move it to the other monitor and expand it to fit the entire screen.
- If you do not have dual monitors, when you select a case using the button, it will open in a new window, and you must toggle between the case and the courseware.

Note: The cases have bookmarks for each form, letter, etc., within the case. You may select a bookmark to advance to that document within the case. Or you may scroll up and down throughout the case by using the scrollbar on the right-hand side of the window.

Section 1 - Introduction

Training Coordinator's Module Guide for *Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)*

	<p>Throughout this module, you will be prompted when to open a given case and when to close it.”</p> <p>You may want to reinforce this information during your briefing and make sure when they come to their first online case, they understand what to do with it.</p>
DIC Test Design	<p>The lesson posttests measure a portion of the rating process from reviewing the claims folder to preparing a rating decision. The <i>DIC Module</i> pretest and posttests each consist of five cases which the student must review and then rate (final or deferred). Students will be required to use the electronic Death Rating Template file to generate a rating decision.</p>
Module Pretest	<p>Taking the module pretest is optional. A student may choose to take the test to determine if he or she can opt out of taking the module, or they may choose to go directly to the lessons.</p> <p>There are five cases in the module pretest. The cases are designed to assess the student's ability to perform the task of preparing a rating decision for a DIC claim at the Basic Ratings level.</p> <p>The passing criteria for the module pretest are provided in the test directions/answer keys which can be accessed in the VBA Learning Catalog. Search for TMS Item #1380383.</p> <p>While you do need to administer the module pretest, you do not need to enter the test scores. After you score the test answer sheets and provide feedback to the students, you will email the test scores to the TPSS Help Desk (CDSHelpDesk@vba.va.gov). You can email the scores for multiple students at the same time. The email must include the following information for each student: student's TMS student identifier/TMS user name, module name, test name, test score of P or F, and test date.</p>
Lesson Posttests	<p>Once students complete a lesson, they will be prompted by the computer to take the lesson posttest. There are two available variants of each lesson posttest. When administering the lesson posttest you will assign test</p>

Section 1 - Introduction

Training Coordinator's Module Guide for *Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)*

variants to the students. Instruct the students to take Variant 1 first and then Variant 2, if needed. You may direct a student to take a different variant if he or she fails one variant or when test security may be compromised.

Note: Your Training Coordinator's Guide offers tips and guidelines for providing test feedback, and prescribing remediation.

The lesson posttests are designed to test the material specifically covered in each lesson. Lesson 3 does not have a posttest. Students will be tested on what they have learned in Lesson 3 at the end of Lesson 4.

For the most part, instructions for the lesson posttests contain an Assumptions and Conditions section that informs the student of characteristics inherent to the cases used in the testing environment.

Because it is important to demonstrate the "building" process of rating cases, some cases will be revisited in subsequent lesson posttests. Specifically, some cases used in the Lesson 3/4 posttest will be used again in the Lesson 6 and Lesson 7 posttests. For this reason, it is important that the student have the correct answers at the end of the Lesson 3/4 posttest and the Lesson 6 posttest. **You may want to have them write down the answers before proceeding to the next lesson posttest.**

Important: If it is necessary at any time following the Lesson 3/4 posttest for a student to take a variant, you will need to ensure that the student has the answers to the pertinent cases. This will help to alleviate the students having to review the entire case(s) from scratch.

The passing criteria vary for each lesson posttest. Refer to the test directions/answer keys for more information. You can access the test scoring instructions and answer keys from the VBA Learning Catalog. Search for TMS Item #1380383.

Important: While you do need to administer the lesson test, you do not need to enter the lesson test scores.

Section 1 - Introduction

Training Coordinator's Module Guide for *Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)*

Module Posttest

There are three variants of the module posttest available. When administering the module posttest you will assign test variants to the students. Instruct the students to take Variant 1 first and then Variant 2 and 3, if needed. You may direct a student to take a different variant if he or she fails one variant or when test security may be compromised.

There are five cases in each module posttest. The cases in the module posttest are designed to assess the student's ability to apply what they have learned in the Basic Ratings Original DIC Module. All cases are accessible on the computer.

Refer to the test scoring instructions/answer keys for more information on the passing criteria for each module posttest. You can access the test scoring instructions and answer keys from the VBA Learning Catalog. Search for TMS Item #1380383.

While you do need to administer the module test, you do not need to enter the test scores. After you score the test answer sheets and provide feedback to the students, you will email the test scores to the TPSS Help Desk (CDSHelpDesk@vba.va.gov). You can email the scores for multiple students at the same time. The email must include the following information for each student: student's TMS student identifier/TMS user name, module name, test name, test score of P or F, and test date.

Section 1 - Introduction

Training Coordinator's Module Guide for *Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)*

Death Rating Template and TPSS Rating Text

During the Lesson 7 cooperative exercise, the Lesson 7 posttest, and the module tests, students will prepare rating decisions using the Death Rating Template to show they can perform the task.

The Death Rating Template is an electronic file that is formatted to look like a rating decision for a death claim. It has fields in which students must enter specific information about the claim. Students are to complete the Death Rating Template by typing in the necessary information for each field after they have reviewed and evaluated the case.

Students will use the TPSS Rating Text to copy and paste the appropriate wording for each issue into the Reasons for Decision section of the Rating Template. Both the Death Rating Template and the TPSS Rating Text are available from Rating Tools under the Tools button within the module.

Students must demonstrate they can perform the task of evaluating a claim for DIC by preparing a rating decision---they just won't be using RBA or RBA2000 to do it. **It will be up to the Regional Offices to provide training after TPSS to teach and practice actual generation of the rating document using RBA2000.**

Be sure to collect ALL completed rating decisions (both paper-based and electronic) from the students after discussion.

Publications



Ensure that students have access to DIC-relevant reference materials, such as:

- M21-1MR
- 38 CFR, Parts III and IV
- Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC) decisions/decision assessment documentation
- VBA Circulars, "Fast Letters," Training Letters, and Policy Letters
- Merck Manual
- Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary
- Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) – latest edition

Section 1 - Introduction
Training Coordinator's Module Guide for
Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

Contact Information

To report problems with the computer courseware:

☞ Contact your local IRM support.

If you're local IRM support is not available or does not know how to troubleshoot the problem,

☞ Contact the VBA TPSS Help Desk!

Email: CDSHelpDesk@vba.va.gov

☞ Connect to the Intranet



Access the comments database web form, go to the Compensation Service Home Page (<http://cptraining.vba.va.gov>). From here, select the training button, then the TPSS button. On the page that appears, select the comments feedback form.

Section 2 - Module Master Planning Chart
Training Coordinator's Module Guide for
Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

Section 2 - Module Master Planning Chart

Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation Module

The Module Master Planning Chart is designed to provide you with the information you need to effectively plan the scheduling and resource requirements for this module

Note: The estimated range of time required to complete the online content, including cooperative exercises and a single version of the Lesson Posttests, is 14 hours, 15 minutes to 23 hours, 45 minutes. The Module Posttest times ranged from 5 hours to 7 hours. The estimated total student course time ranges from 17 hours, 15 minutes to 28 hours, 45 minutes.

This Module Master Planning Chart is based on the average time that students required during the validation of this module. Be aware that the actual times for students may be more or less than the time listed here.

- Estimated total Student time for online course and a single version of the Module Posttest: **23 hours**
- Estimated total Student time for Module (aka, total “seat” time): **26 hours**
(**Note:** All estimated total “seat” times for modules include module orientation, the online courseware and cooperative exercises, if applicable, along with, when given, a single variant of the Lesson Posttest(s), feedback, and a single version of the Module Posttest and feedback.)
- Estimated total Training Coordinator Time for administrative duties: **11 hours, 30 minutes**
(**Note:** This total includes the additional time required by the TC to perform briefings, feedback, and any administrative duties such as grading tests and emailing TPSS Help Desk, i.e., those shaded line items that are specifically TC times only. Total time accounts for administration of a single variant of the Lesson Posttest(s), when given, and a single version of the Module Posttest. Module Pretest preparation and grading is not included in the total. Although the TC is listed as personnel for all of the online lessons and all tests, the TC does not have to be present for the entire time the students are working in a lesson or taking a test. The TC may be working with other students or even performing other duties while students are working in TPSS. The TC needs to be available to answer questions as needed. That time will vary depending on how familiar with TPSS the students are.

Section 2 - Module Master Planning Chart
 Training Coordinator's Module Guide for
Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

Duration		Activity	Notes/Tips
hrs	min		
	10	Module Pretest Preparation	Includes giving student access to DIC Module in TMS.
7	00	Module Pretest, if applicable	Conducted sometime prior to Day 1 of the training.
	45	Module Pretest Grading	Scoring instructions and answer keys can be accessed in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	30	Administrative Functions	Includes emailing TPSS Help Desk with Module Pretest results, if applicable, assigning student privileges, notifying students of course schedule, and preparing a briefing.
	30	Orientation/Briefing	Includes setting up students' workstation area and required materials. Ensure students can log into the courseware, navigate through the course using the buttons and prompts, and understand what online "Tools" are available to help.
	15	Module Introduction	Students read the module objective.
1	00	Lesson 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson Introduction – Students will read the lesson objective(s). • Topic 1: Verify Requirement for Rating Activity • Topic 2: Verify Requirement for Rating/Service Connection • Topic 3: Initial Duty to Assist
	15	Lesson 1 Posttest Variant 1 Briefing	Includes reviewing results of any cooperative exercises and ensuring that students are ready to take the test. Includes assigning a test variant to each student.
	30	Lesson 1 Posttest Variant 1	Students access the test online and turn in any printed documents to TC for scoring.
	30	Lesson 1 Posttest Grading	Scoring instructions and answer keys can be accessed in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	10	Lesson 1 Posttest Variant 1 Feedback	Note: Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If a student fails the Lesson Posttest, you must provide remediation to the student until the student feels confident enough to take a variant of the Lesson Posttest. At that time, you will administer the variant to the student in the same way you administered the Lesson Posttest and provide feedback based on the student's results of the variant.
	10	Lesson 1 Posttest Variant 2	Includes ensuring students have had enough feedback and remediation to feel prepared for Variant 2.

Section 2 - Module Master Planning Chart
 Training Coordinator's Module Guide for
Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

Duration		Activity	Notes/Tips
hrs	min		
		Briefing (if applicable)	
	30	Lesson 1 Posttest Variant 2	
	30	Lesson 1 Posttest Variant 2 Grading	Scoring instructions and answer keys can be accessed in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	10	Lesson 1 Posttest Variant 2 Feedback	Note: Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If the student who failed the first version of the Lesson Posttest also fails the variant, you may allow the student to progress to the next lesson. Make arrangements to provide additional assistance to the student before he/she takes the Module Posttest.
1	00	Lesson 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson Introduction – Students will read the lesson objective(s). • Topic 1: Primary and Contributory Cause of Death • Topic 2: Resolve Issues of Service Connection in Willful Misconduct Cases
	15	Lesson 2 Posttest Variant 1 Briefing	Includes reviewing results of any cooperative exercises and ensuring that students are ready to take the test. Includes assigning a test variant to each student.
	30	Lesson 2 Posttest Variant 1	Students access the test online and turn in any printed documents to TC for scoring.
	30	Lesson 2 Posttest Grading	Scoring instructions and answer keys can be accessed in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	10	Lesson 2 Posttest Feedback	Note: Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If a student fails the Lesson Posttest, you must provide remediation to the student until the student feels confident enough to take a variant of the Lesson Posttest. At that time, you will administer the variant to the student in the same way you administered the Lesson Posttest and provide feedback based on the student's results of the variant.
	10	Lesson 2 Posttest Variant 2 Briefing (if applicable)	Includes ensuring students have had enough feedback and remediation to feel prepared for Variant 2.

Section 2 - Module Master Planning Chart
 Training Coordinator's Module Guide for
Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

Duration		Activity	Notes/Tips
hrs	min		
	30	Lesson 2 Posttest Variant 2	
	35	Lesson 2 Posttest Variant 2 Grading	Scoring instructions and answer keys can be accessed in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	10	Lesson 2 Posttest Variant 2 Feedback	Note: Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If the student who failed the first version of the Lesson Posttest also fails the variant, you may allow the student to progress to the next lesson. Make arrangements to provide additional assistance to the student before he/she takes the Module Posttest.
2	00	Lesson 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson Introduction – Students will read the lesson objective(s). • Topic 1: Determine Applicability of Previous Rating Decisions • Topic 2: Review Remaining Evidence of Record • Topic 3: Compare the Cause of Death with Evidence of Record
2	00	Lesson 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson Introduction – Students will read the lesson objective(s). • Topic 1: Weigh Evidence Against SC Provisions • Topic 2: Confirm No CUE • Topic 3: Determine Entitlement in Special Cases
	15	Lesson 3/4 Posttest Variant 1 Briefing	Includes reviewing results of any cooperative exercises and ensuring that students are ready to take the test. Includes assigning a test variant to each student.
1	30	Lesson 3/4 Posttest Variant 1	Students access the test online and turn in any printed documents to TC for scoring.
	30	Lesson 3/4 Posttest Variant 1 Grading	Scoring instructions and answer keys can be accessed in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	15	Lesson 3/4 Posttest Variant 1	Note: Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If a student fails

Section 2 - Module Master Planning Chart
 Training Coordinator's Module Guide for
Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

Duration		Activity	Notes/Tips
hrs	min		
		Feedback	the Lesson Posttest, you must provide remediation to the student until the student feels confident enough to take a variant of the Lesson Posttest. At that time, you will administer the variant to the student in the same way you administered the Lesson Posttest and provide feedback based on the student's results of the variant.
	10	Lesson 3/4 Posttest Variant 2 Briefing (if applicable)	Includes ensuring students have had enough feedback and remediation to feel prepared for Variant 2.
1	30	Lesson 3/4 Posttest Variant 2	
	30	Lesson 4 Posttest Variant 2 Grading	Scoring instructions and answer keys can be accessed in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	15	Lesson 4 Posttest Variant 2 Feedback	Note: Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If the student who failed the first version of the Lesson Posttest also fails the variant, you may allow the student to progress to the next lesson. Make arrangements to provide additional assistance to the student before he/she takes the Module Posttest.
1	00	Lesson 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson Introduction – Students will read the lesson objective(s). • Topic 1: Determine Additional Evidence Requirements • Topic 2: Identify Types and Sources of Evidence Required or Requested • Topic 3: Determine Responses to Requests and List Additional Evidence Needs
	15	Lesson 5 Posttest Variant 1 Briefing	Includes reviewing results of any cooperative exercises and ensuring that students are ready to take the test. Includes assigning a test variant to each student.
	45	Lesson 5 Posttest Variant 1	Students access the test online and turn in any printed documents to TC for scoring.
	30	Lesson 5 Posttest Variant 1	Scoring instructions and answer keys can be accessed in the VBA Learning Catalog.

Section 2 - Module Master Planning Chart
 Training Coordinator's Module Guide for
Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

Duration		Activity	Notes/Tips
hrs	min		
		Grading	
	15	Lesson 5 Posttest Feedback	Note: Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If a student fails the Lesson Posttest, you must provide remediation to the student until the student feels confident enough to take a variant of the Lesson Posttest. At that time, you will administer the variant to the student in the same way you administered the Lesson Posttest and provide feedback based on the student's results of the variant.
	10	Lesson 5 Posttest Variant 2 Briefing (if applicable)	Includes ensuring students have had enough feedback and remediation to feel prepared for Variant 2.
	45	Lesson 5 Posttest Variant 2	
	30	Lesson 5 Posttest Variant 2 Grading	Scoring instructions and answer keys can be accessed in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	15	Lesson 5 Posttest Variant 2 Feedback	Note: Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If the student who failed the first version of the Lesson Posttest also fails the variant, you may allow the student to progress to the next lesson. Make arrangements to provide additional assistance to the student before he/she takes the Module Posttest.
1		Lesson 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson Introduction – Students will read the lesson objective(s). • Topic 1: Entitlement to Various Benefits • Topic 2: Confirm Duty to Assist
	15	Lesson 6 Posttest Briefing	Includes reviewing results of any cooperative exercises and ensuring that students are ready to take the test. Includes assigning a test variant to each student.
	45	Lesson 6 Posttest Variant 1	Students access the test online and turn in any printed documents to TC for scoring.
	30	Lesson 6 Posttest Variant 1	Scoring instructions and answer keys can be accessed in the VBA Learning Catalog.

Section 2 - Module Master Planning Chart
 Training Coordinator's Module Guide for
Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

Duration		Activity	Notes/Tips
hrs	min		
		Grading	
	15	Lesson 6 Posttest Variant 1 Feedback	Note: Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If a student fails the Lesson Posttest, you must provide remediation to the student until the student feels confident enough to take a variant of the Lesson Posttest. At that time, you will administer the variant to the student in the same way you administered the Lesson Posttest and provide feedback based on the student's results of the variant.
	10	Lesson 6 Posttest Variant 2 Briefing (if applicable)	Includes ensuring students have had enough feedback and remediation to feel prepared for Variant 2.
	45	Lesson 6 Posttest Variant 2	
	30	Lesson 6 Posttest Variant 2 Grading	Scoring instructions and answer keys can be accessed in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	15	Lesson 6 Posttest Variant 2 Feedback	Note: Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If the student who failed the first version of the Lesson Posttest also fails the variant, you may allow the student to progress to the next lesson. Make arrangements to provide additional assistance to the student before he/she takes the Module Posttest.
2	45	Lesson 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson Introduction – Students will read the lesson objective(s). • Topic 1: Application and Summary
	20	Lesson 7 Posttest Variant 1 Briefing	Includes reviewing results of any cooperative exercises and ensuring that students are ready to take the test. Includes assigning a test variant to each student.
3	00	Lesson 7 Posttest Variant 1	Students access the test online and turn in any printed documents to TC for scoring.

Section 2 - Module Master Planning Chart
 Training Coordinator's Module Guide for
Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

Duration		Activity	Notes/Tips
hrs	min		
	30	Lesson 7 Posttest Variant 1 Grading	Scoring instructions and answer keys can be accessed in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	15	Lesson 7 Posttest Variant 1 Feedback	Note: Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If a student fails the Lesson Posttest, you must provide remediation to the student until the student feels confident enough to take a variant of the Lesson Posttest. At that time, you will administer the variant to the student in the same way you administered the Lesson Posttest and provide feedback based on the student's results of the variant.
	15	Lesson 7 Posttest Variant 2 Briefing (if applicable)	Includes ensuring students have had enough feedback and remediation to feel prepared for Variant 2.
3	00	Lesson 7 Posttest Variant 2	
	30	Lesson 7 Posttest Variant 2 Grading	Scoring instructions and answer keys can be accessed in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	15	Lesson 7 Posttest Variant 2 Feedback	Note: Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If the student who failed the first version of the Lesson Posttest also fails the variant, you may allow the student to progress to the next lesson. Make arrangements to provide additional assistance to the student before he/she takes the Module Posttest.
	25	Module Posttest Variant 1 Briefing	Includes reviewing results of any cooperative exercises and ensuring that students are ready to take the test. Includes assigning a test variant to each student.
7	00	Module Posttest Variant 1	Students access the test online and turn in any printed documents to TC for scoring.
1	45	Module Posttest Variant 1 Grading	Scoring instructions and answer keys can be accessed in the VBA Learning Catalog.

Section 2 - Module Master Planning Chart
 Training Coordinator's Module Guide for
Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

Duration		Activity	Notes/Tips
hrs	min		
	30	Module Posttest Variant 1 Feedback	Note: Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If a student fails the Module Posttest, you must provide remediation until the student feels confident enough to take a variant of the Module Posttest. At that time, you will administer the variant in the same way you administered the Module Posttest and provide feedback based on the student's results of the variant.
	15	Module Posttest Variant 2	Includes reviewing results of any cooperative exercises and ensuring that students are ready to take the test. Includes assigning a test variant to each student.
7	00	Module Posttest Variant 2, (as necessary)	Students access the test online and turn in any printed documents to TC for scoring.
1	45	Module Posttest Variant 2 Grading	Scoring instructions and answer keys can be accessed in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	30	Module Posttest Variant 2 Feedback	Note: If a student fails Variant 2 of the Module Posttest, you must provide remediation until the student feels confident enough to take Variant 3 of the Module Posttest. At that time, you will administer Variant 3 in the same way you administered the Module Posttest Variant 2 and provide feedback based on the student's results of Variant 2.
	15	Module Posttest Variant 3 Briefing (if applicable)	Includes ensuring students have had enough feedback and remediation to feel prepared for Variant 3.
7	00	Module Posttest Variant 3, (as necessary)	
1	45	Module Posttest Variant 3	Scoring instructions and answer keys can be accessed in the VBA Learning Catalog.

Section 2 - Module Master Planning Chart
 Training Coordinator's Module Guide for
Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

Duration		Activity	Notes/Tips
hrs	min		
		Grading	
	15	Module Posttest Variant 3 Feedback	Note: If a student fails Variant 3 of the Module Posttest, you must provide remediation until the student can demonstrate proficiency in the task.
	15	Emailing TPSS Help Desk Based on Module Posttest Results	

Section 3 - Lesson Summaries
Training Coordinator's Module Guide for
Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

Section 3 - Lesson Summaries

Training Coordinator Notes:

After all students have completed the Lesson 7 Posttest, review the entire module by reading the following summary (or your own personalized version). Respond to any questions they may raise before they continue to the module posttest.

After you have presented the module review, if a student does not feel ready to continue to the module posttest, allow him or her some time to review specific topics or issues within the lesson before administering the test.

Tell students:

“Now that you have completed the module, you should find it easier to understand the multiple actions involved in rating a claim for DIC. There are many actions and processes that you must check and recheck in the course of the rating process. No detail, regardless of how insignificant it may seem on the surface, can be overlooked. Remember that this practice is mandated by law in the Duty to Assist doctrine.”

Section 3 - Lesson Summaries

Training Coordinator's Module Guide for

Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

Lesson 1 - Verify Requirements for Rating

It's your primary responsibility as an RVSR to carefully review each DIC case you receive and verify the requirements for rating it. Once you receive the claim, make sure all required information, such as the Veteran's name, file number, and Social Security number is included.

Multiple claimants may apply for DIC benefits because of the death of one Veteran. The VSR will verify each claimant's relationship to the Veteran by noting the forms included in the file folder. If VA Form 21-534 is included, the claimant is either the spouse or a child of the Veteran. If VA Form 21-535 is included, the claimants are the parents of the Veteran.

Scan the claims folder for any additional information as well, such as testimonials, reports, and other application forms. If any information is missing, return the file to the VSR.

The last step in ensuring that the requirements for DIC benefits have been met is to check the Veteran's military service status to determine if he or she has met the minimum active-duty service requirements.

As you continue evaluating the claim, make sure the claims folder contains verifiable proof of death, so that you can begin the process of determining service connection (SC) for the cause of death.

The VSR is responsible for gathering the proof of death evidence. If proper evidence is not in the file, return it to the VSR. The death certificate is the primary source of information about the cause of death. Make sure that a physician has signed the death certificate. If it is not signed, return the file to the VSR. If the cause of death is not verifiable in the primary source of evidence (death certificate), check the file for other sources of evidence.

After checking for verifiable proof of death and identifying the cause(s) of death, identify the factors that establish requirements for rating. If the evidence does not fall under any of these factors, return the file to the VSR.

Section 3 - Lesson Summaries

Training Coordinator's Module Guide for

Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

Lesson 2 - Principles of Service Connection for Cause of Death

Currently, you have the Duty to Assist any claimant who files a substantially complete DIC claim. If it is not substantially complete (e.g., evidence is missing, including Federal or non-Federal records), immediately notify the claimant in writing. If you have not received at least one response to your initial request of evidence, make at least one follow-up request.

Understanding the concepts of primary and contributory cause of death is important to rating a DIC claim. A service-connected disability is considered the primary cause of death when that disability, singularly or jointly with some other condition, was the immediate cause of death or etiologically related. A service-connected disease is considered contributory cause of death when such a disability:

- contributed substantially or materially to the cause of death,
- combined with another condition caused death, or
- aided or accelerated death.

Carefully consider a service-connected disease or injury affecting vital organs, previously rated as disabling, as a contributing factor to the death. Base the consideration on available medical information. Also, take into consideration any minor disabilities that could be additional aspects of contributory cause of death.

There are three additional principles of service connection that are also important:

- Nonservice-connected causes of death
- Proximate service connection
- Suicide

It is important for you to understand and differentiate misconduct cases from other DIC claims. If it is determined that death resulted from an act of willful misconduct, such as drug abuse, alcohol abuse, or suicide, the claim must be denied.

Section 3 - Lesson Summaries

Training Coordinator's Module Guide for

Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

Obtaining additional evidence to rate a DIC claim is very important. If death occurs in service, the service department will conduct an investigation and make a finding. Evidence may include the investigation report, medical evidence, or statements from witnesses or others.

If death occurs after service, police reports and medical lay evidence also will be available. If suicide occurs after service, you may have to review the file to establish a mental condition that was service connected.

While reviewing evidence, keep in mind that statements by Veterans, their advocates, and/or their family members must be given due consideration. This is especially true if they have sufficient probative value to warrant further investigation on facts and circumstances, and/or warrant further development.

Consider the evidence provided to decide whether the death of the Veteran resulted from an act of willful misconduct. There are different criteria used to weigh and judge evidence individually and as a whole. These criteria, also known as “the rules of evidence,” apply to DIC claims. Remember that these rules include determining:

- the credibility of the evidence,
- the value of the evidence, and
- whether the evidence is allowable under governing regulations.

Section 3 - Lesson Summaries

Training Coordinator's Module Guide for

Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

Lesson 3 - Determine Service Connection for Cause of Death I

As discussed previously, the death of a Veteran is considered service connected when the cause of death is due to a service-connected disability. In other words, the service-connected disability is the primary cause or contributed to the cause of death.

To establish whether the cause of death is service connected, check the claims folder to see if there are any previous rating decisions pertaining to a disability. Previous rating decisions are at times critical and often facilitate the task of the RVSR.

Once you establish that the cause of death is service connected, compare previous service-connected rating decisions with the cause of death to determine if there is a match. Begin with the most recent ratings and working back until a match is found. If a match is found, proceed with the case development by reviewing all remaining evidence of record. If a match is not found, review the remaining evidence of record.

Rating decisions denying service connection must also be compared with the cause of death to determine if there is a match. As before, if a match is found, proceed with development and review the remaining evidence of record. If a match is not found, review all remaining evidence of record to ensure that service connection was properly denied.

In this lesson, you will also learn the process of reviewing the remaining evidence of record. Apply sound judgement in the consideration and evaluation of evidence in death-related claims. As you evaluate all types of evidence, note all relevant evidence that will aid you in rating a DIC case. As you may recall from the Compensation Module, there are different types of relevant evidence that may be used to establish service connection including:

- Circumstances of service
- Line of Duty/Willful Misconduct
- Incurrence with Service
- Aggravation of Preexisting Conditions
- Chronicity without Intervening Causes
- Continuity of Symptomology

Section 3 - Lesson Summaries

Training Coordinator's Module Guide for

Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

- Presumptive Occurrence
- Additional Evidence

Finally, you will learn how to make a comparison to verify if the previous rating decisions correspond to the evidence of record. You will compare the cause of death with evidence of record and determine whether the evidence supports the rating decision.

There will be situations where a case will not have previous rating decisions. For that reason, you must thoroughly review the evidence to match any condition that could be related to the cause of death. Regardless of whether it is a claim that has previous rating decisions, your next step is to compare the cause of death with the evidence of record.

Lesson 4 - Determine Service Connection for Cause of Death II

If any of the following instances occur, you must weigh evidence further to establish service connection:

- The claims folder does not include any previous rating decisions.
- Previous rating(s) does not address any condition related to the cause of death.
- The Veteran did not file any claims.
- Service connection for a disability was denied.

It is also important to be familiar with service-connection provisions to service connect the cause of death of a Veteran. The following service-connection provisions apply to DIC:

- Direct
- Aggravated
- Presumptive
- Secondary

Also, be aware that there are three possible issues that could affect previous rating decisions:

- Clear and unmistakable error (CUE)
- Administrative error
- Difference of opinion

Section 3 - Lesson Summaries
Training Coordinator's Module Guide for
Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

There are several special circumstances where benefits may be granted, even if:

- five or ten years have elapsed between the date of separation from service and the date of death,
- service connection is not established because of deferred issues, and
- the cause of death is not service connected.

You need to be thoroughly familiar with these special entitlements to be able to rate a DIC claim. They are:

- 38 USC 1318 5-Year Provision
- 38 USC 1318 10-Year Provision
- 38 USC 1151 Provision

If neither service connection nor special circumstances can establish entitlement in cases of death, the claim must be disallowed.

Lesson 5 - Determine Additional Evidence Requirements and Response

As an RVSR responsible for rating DIC claims, you must be able to carefully review each case to determine additional evidence requirements and the responses to those requirements.

Examples of when you may need additional evidence are when you:

- cannot identify the cause of death,
- are uncertain whether death is the result of willful misconduct, and
- cannot establish that death is service connected.

When additional evidence is required, knowing the type and source of the evidence will aid you in obtaining it.

As part of the process of rating a DIC claim, scan the claims folder for previous evidence requests. These requests may be deferred rating decisions or other types of evidence requests.

Before making a decision on a claim, you are responsible for ensuring that all efforts to assist the claimant have been made, and that adequate time for response from the claimant and other sources of

Section 3 - Lesson Summaries

Training Coordinator's Module Guide for

Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

Lesson 6 - Ancillary Benefits/Competency Determinations/Confirm Duty to Assist (DTA)

evidence has been given. Remember that the claimant has 30 days to present the requested evidence.

If a claim is under-developed or incomplete, issue a deferred rating and identify all evidence needed to complete the rating of the case.

Though the ultimate responsibility to establish or verify entitlements to VA benefits rests with the claimant, make reasonable efforts to assist claimants in securing public documents and other evidence. If the file indicates that evidence was requested but was never received, and the time limit expired, complete a rating decision based on the evidence of record. If entitlement can be granted under 38 U.S.C. 1318 (total disability), even if service connection for cause of death cannot be established, continue developing the claim.

After the death of a Veteran, the spouse and family are many times left without the physical support and income assistance provided by the deceased. The VA provides various ways to aid and assist claimants with these needs.

In addition to the required DIC rating for the death of the Veteran, claimants may also be entitled to various ancillary benefits and determinations. These benefits are:

- Dependent's Educational Assistance (DEA) for Veteran's spouse or children
- Aid and Attendance benefits (A&A) for surviving spouse and/or parent
- Housebound benefits for surviving spouse
- Competency determination for spouse, children and/or parent of the Veteran

Note: While reviewing the claims folder, you first need to verify if the claimant received previous rating decisions concerning ancillary benefits. If so, incorporate any previous entitlement decisions into the DIC rating as appropriate.

DEA basic eligibility exists if the Veteran:

- died in service,
- had a permanent and total service-connected

Section 3 - Lesson Summaries

Training Coordinator's Module Guide for

Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

disability in existence at the date of the Veteran's death, or

- died as a result of a service-connected disability.

There are various factors to consider for entitlement to A&A benefits. These factors are statutory requirements, which are defined by law, and factual needs, which look at what the person can do and what sort of tasks they need assistance with. Consider the following questions when determining if A&A is needed:

- Does a person need the assistance of another person to protect himself or herself from hazards common in everyday living?
- Would this person survive without some sort of help?
- What can or can't the person do?

Only surviving spouses who are receiving, or are entitled to receive, DIC or improved pension may qualify for the Housebound rate under 38 CFR 3.351. A claimant does not have to be "totally confined" to gain benefits. The claimant can be "substantially" confined to his or her home or immediate premises to qualify for benefits.

The issue of competency has to be considered in conjunction with a claim for Aid and Attendance. If the claimant shows medical evidence raising a question of mental capacity to manage his or her financial affairs, or has a court appointed guardian or fiduciary, the claimant's competency should be addressed. According to 38 CFR 3.353, you need clear and convincing medical evidence of a person's incompetency in order to grant for that issue. The issue of competency is to be disregarded altogether if there is no evidence of incompetency. If there is doubt, the presumption is in favor of competency.

Remember to carefully review all the evidence of record prior to considering a denial. If it appears additional evidence is available, request it. Ensure that adequate time (30 days claimant/3rd party or 60 days for Federal Records) for response to evidence requests has been given.

Section 3 - Lesson Summaries

Training Coordinator's Module Guide for

Rate an Original Claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

Lesson 7 - Prepare the Rating Decision

Ensure that all efforts to assist have been made. Once sufficient evidence is obtained, rate the issue in the case. If sufficient evidence is not on hand, confirm that Duty to Assist requirements have been met before denying the case.

Duty to Assist applies to all claims received, whether they involve DIC or ancillary benefits, and to all issues, whether they are inferred or primary. It is your responsibility to ensure that all evidence is received and is adequate for rating. Remember that the rating decision must indicate that all efforts to obtain evidence have been exhausted.

To successfully complete the task of rating a DIC claim, you must prepare a rating decision.

All ratings must contain the issues reviewed, the evidence reviewed, a complete rationale of the decision, and a conclusion that includes supporting data.

A complete rationale for all issues reviewed and decisions made must be provided when rating the claim. You must explain in the rationale how you arrived at the effective date for benefits. Explain what evidence was considered, why it was considered, and how it related to the final decision.

Include very descriptive reasons for decision for each issue, and provide the type of evidence that was used to rate the claim, such as STRs, clinical records, or any other information about the cause of death.

Follow the instructions for using the Death Rating Template to generate your decision during TPSS training and testing.