Training Coordinator's Module Guide
for
Reopened Claims for DIC

November 5, 2013

For Training Purposes Only

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Section 1 – Introduction

Introduction

Welcome to the *Reopened Claims for DIC* Module of the Basic Ratings Training and Performance Support System. Please read this Module Guide in its entirety. Feel free to highlight portions or write down notes as you read through this document. Within these pages, you will find the information you need to successfully set up and implement this module.

Section 1 of this guide is an introduction designed to present you with a broad overview of the *Reopened Claims for DIC* Module.

Section 2 of this guide contains the Module Master Planning Chart which is designed to provide you with the information you need to effectively plan the scheduling for the module. Notes and tips are also provided to let you know key instructional events and activities.

Section 3 of this guide contains a summary for the *Reopened Claims for DIC* Module. You may use this to familiarize yourself with the module contents and also as a review for your students before they complete the posttests.

Who Will Take The Modules?

Students who take these modules are RVSRs who are preparing for rating duties involving rating reopened DIC claims and who have successfully completed the *Rate an Original Claim for DIC* module.

Students who take this module should have either failed or opted not to take the module pretest.

> 📄 **Note:** The pretest is optional. Students who want to take the *Reopened Claims for DIC* Module may choose to take the pretest, or may choose to go directly to the module.

All students selected to take these modules should take each lesson and topic in sequence to ensure that he/she has (or gains) a comprehensive understanding of the content of the module.

TPSS Materials

Everything that your students need to complete the Compensation Module is available to them within the module online. Once you provide them 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 #1380395.

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.

Throughout this module, you will be prompted when to open a given case and when to close it."

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.

Module Map

To get an overview of how the *Reopened Claims for DIC* Module is laid out, take a look at the map on the following pages.
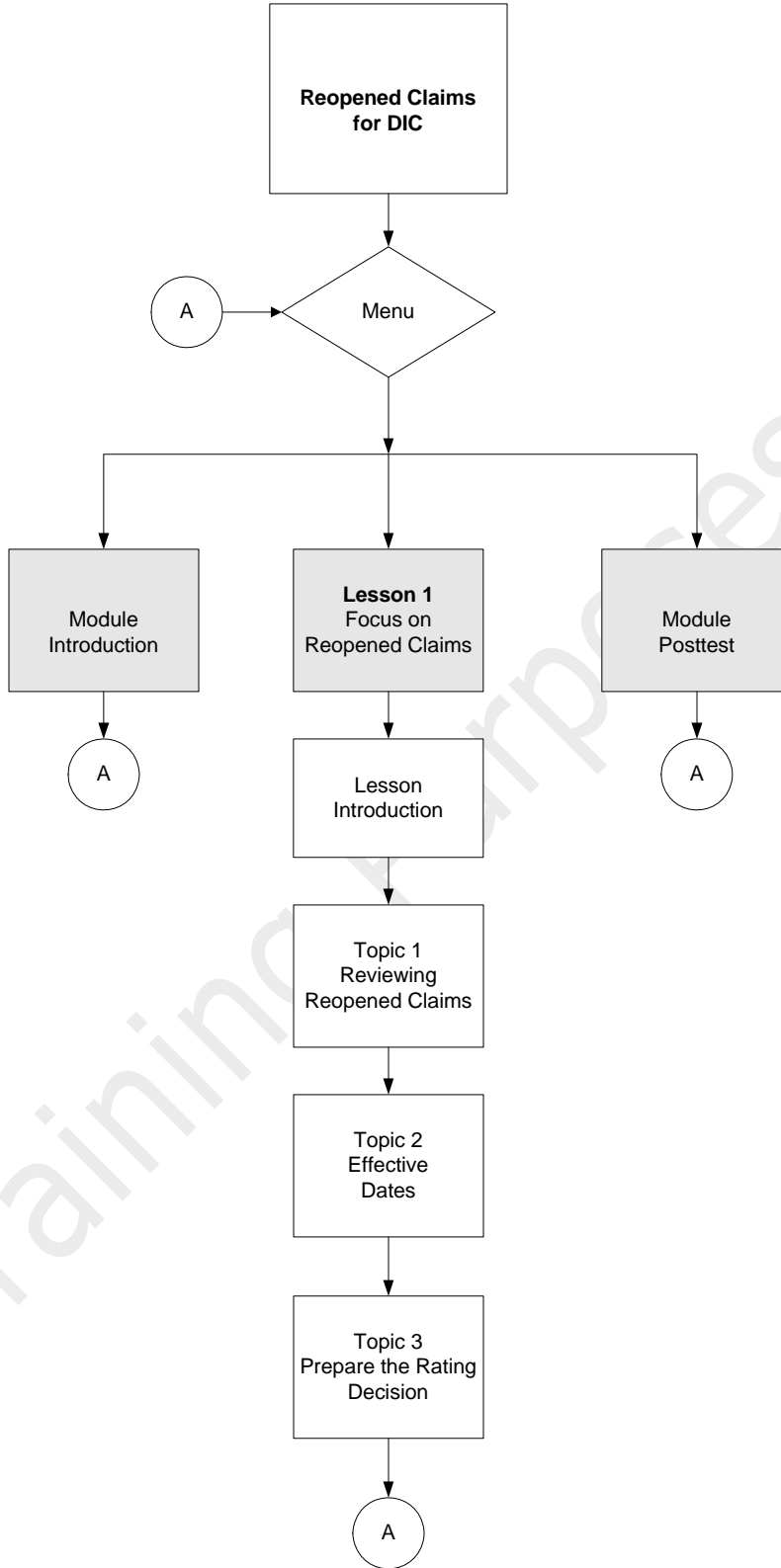
As you can see, the *Reopened Claims for DIC* Module is comprised of one lesson with three topics. The students must take the topics in the order that they are presented.
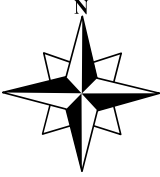
Learning Objectives	The *Reopened Claims for DIC* Module has one lesson that provides instruction on the requirements of the learning objective for the module.
	The learning objective details the **action** to be taken (the task), the **conditions** under which the task is to be performed, the **standards** to be met in order to successfully perform the task, and the **time** it should take to complete the task on the job.
	Student performance will be assessed based on their ability to meet these standards. It is critical that students understand what is expected of them throughout training. For this reason, they will be asked to read the learning objective at the beginning of the module.
	Students will be directed to contact you if they have any questions about what they will be learning and doing in the lesson. Therefore, you should be thoroughly familiar with the objectives, including each of their components and what they mean for the students. Or, identify the person 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 may be necessary.
Test Design	Tests are designed to evaluate the students in an authentic or "real life" setting using cases or scenarios. The scenarios and evidence used in the tests are derived from actual claims for DIC that have been submitted to the VBA. For testing purposes, the cases have been sanitized and modified. These modifications include replacing actual names and other identifying information with fictitious names and information to protect privacy, and adding or removing elements and issues of the case to ensure appropriate criteria are tested. The cases and answer keys have been reviewed and adjusted by subject matter experts (SMEs) in the VBA and approved by C&P in an effort to remove unintentional errors or issues not relevant to the criteria being tested.

Reopened Claims for DIC tests consist of three parts:

Part 1
Various scenarios which the students must review and answer based on the Answer Sheet.

Part 2
Questions based on case information which the student must review and answer on the Answer Sheet.

Part 3
Cases for which students must determine a rating decision (final or deferred). Students will be required to use the Death Rating Template.

Death Rating Template and TPSS Rating Text

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. 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 preparing a rating decision for a reopened claim for DIC—they just won't be using RBA2000 to do it. **It will be up to the Stations to provide training after TPSS to teach and practice actual generation of the rating document using RBA2000.**

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

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Module Test Procedures	Before Students take a Module Posttest: • Have students contact you prior to taking the posttest so you can make sure they do not have any unanswered questions. • Tell students they can use whatever notes they have taken or documents they have printed. They can use any resources they have, but they are not allowed to discuss questions with each other. • Let students know they must contact you after they have completed the posttest. There are two 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, 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.
Test Scoring	Score these tests using the test directions- answer keys. The students must pass ***all parts*** of the test. 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 #1380395. Provide feedback to students. If a student does not pass a test, you must revisit the appropriate section in the module with the student. Once remediation has been conducted, administer a second variant of the test to the student and repeat the scoring and feedback process. 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.

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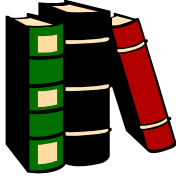
Ensure that students have access to DIC-relevant reference materials, such as:

- M21-1MR, Part III
- 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 or comparable Illustrated Medical Dictionary
- Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) - latest edition

Reporting problems accessing Basic Ratings TPSS courseware

To report problems with the computer courseware:

- Contact your local IRM support. If your 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

Reopened Claims for DIC

Note: The estimated range of time required to complete the online content, including cooperative exercises is 1 hour to 1 hour, 30 minutes. The Module Posttest times ranged from 2 hours to 3 hours. The estimated total student course time ranges from 3 hours to 4 hours, 30 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: **3 hours, 45 minutes**

- Estimated total Student time for Module (aka, total "seat" time): **4 hours, 45 minutes**
  (**Note:** All estimated total "seat" times for modules include module orientation, the online courseware and cooperative exercises, if applicable, along with a single version of the Module Posttest and feedback.)

- Estimated total Training Coordinator Time for administrative duties: **2 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 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.)

Duration		Activity	Notes/Tips
hrs	min		
	15	**Module Pretest Preparation**	Includes giving student access to the *Reopened Claims for DIC* Module in TMS.
2	00	**Module Pretest (optional)**	Conducted sometime prior to and 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 and reference materials. Ensure students can log into the courseware, navigate through the course using the buttons and prompts, and understand what on-line "Tools" are available to help.
	15	**Module Introduction (online)**	Students read the module objective. Students are introduced to lessons contained in the module.
2	00	**Lesson 1**	• **Introduction** – Students will read lesson objective(s) • **Topic 1** – Reviewing Reopened Claims **First Cooperative Exercise** of this module. Students will review five case scenarios to determine whether a claim should or should not be reopened. • **Topic 2** – Effective Dates • **Topic 3** – Prepare the Rating Decision
	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.

Duration		Activity	Notes/Tips
hrs	min		
2	00	**Module Posttest Variant 1**	Students access the test online and turn in any printed documents to TC for scoring.
	45	**Module Posttest Variant 1 Grading**	Scoring instructions and answer keys can be accessed in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	15	**Module Posttest Variant 1 Feedback**	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 Variant 2 of the Module Posttest. At that time, you will administer the Variant 2 in the same way you administered Variant 1 and provide feedback based on the student's results of Variant 2.
	15	**Module Posttest Variant 2 Briefing**	Includes reviewing results of any cooperative exercises and ensuring that students are ready to take the test. Includes assigning a variant to each student.
2	00	**Module Posttest Variant 2 (If applicable)**	Students access the test online and turn in any printed documents to TC for scoring.
	30	**Module Posttest Variant 2 Grading**	Scoring instructions and answer keys can be accessed in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	15	**Module Posttest Variant 2 Feedback**	If a student fails the variant of the Module Posttest, you must provide remediation until the student can demonstrate proficiency in the task.
	15	**Email TPSS Help Desk Based on Module Test Results**	

Duration		Activity	Notes/Tips
hrs	**min**		
Notes:			
1) There is no Lesson Posttest for the *Rate a Reopened Claim for DIC* module.			

Section 3 – Module Summary

Reopened Claims for DIC

Remember to check to see if the prior rating decision is final. If the prior decision is not yet final, subsequent evidence should be considered part of the original or prior claim and evaluated as such. If the prior rating granted SC for cause of death and all inferred issues, the case may be referred back to the VSR for disposition. If the prior rating denied SC for cause of death and the decision is final, ensure duty to assist procedures have been fulfilled, then determine whether new and material evidence has been submitted to reopen the claim and if so, evaluate the merits of the claim.

Keep in mind that entitlement under 38 USC 1318 is established for Veterans who had a service-connected total evaluation (including individual unemployability) for 10 continuous years immediately preceding death, or 5 years, if the total evaluation was continuously in effect from the date of military discharge. Payment of DIC may also be made to survivors of POWs who died after September 30, 1999 and who were rated totally disabled continuously for a period of not less than one year immediately preceding death for a service-connected disability. Another inferred issue in all death claims where there are potentially eligible dependents is entitlement to Chapter 35, Dependents Educational Assistance, which can be established under several criteria including death from service-connected disability or permanent and total disability at the time of death.

If remarriage is ended by death, divorce, or the surviving spouse has ceased living with another person, or holding himself/herself out openly to the public as that person's spouse, entitlement to DIC, Chapter 35, and related benefits are restored. However, Chapter 35 benefits are not payable from October 1, 1998 through November 30, 1999.

The determination of the effective date for entitlement to DIC is made by the VSR. The effective date is the first date of the month during which the Veteran's death occurred if the claim is received within one year of the date of death. Otherwise, the effective date is the date of receipt of the claim. However, the rating specialist does determine the effective date when the surviving spouse is claiming SMP. If the SMP claim is received within one year from date of death, any additional DIC can be paid for any retroactive period for which entitlement to the additional benefit is established. If the SMP claim is received more than one year after date of death it is considered a new claim and the effective date would be date of receipt of the claim or the date entitlement arose, whichever is later.

To successfully complete the task of rating a reopened DIC claim, you must formalize the rating. All ratings must contain the issues reviewed, evidence reviewed, complete rationale for the decision, and a conclusion to include supporting data.

A complete rationale for all issues and decisions made must be provided while rating the claim. For reopened DIC claims, you must fully explain why the claim was or was not reopened. If it was reopened, you must include an explanation regarding your findings of the issue from de novo review.

You must also provide the basis for the decision of service connection for cause of death. Explain what evidence was considered, why it was considered, and how it related to your ultimate decision. Each rationale must include the evidence considered for that issue.

The conclusion will not contain any diagnostic codes or percentages. However, you will list:
- the cause of death; and
- whether it was/was not service connected (SC) on a primary or contributory basis (with the entitling period of service).

You must note any special provisions used to grant DIC.