For Training Purposes Only

**Training Coordinator's Module Guide for
VSR TPSS Dependency Benefits Module**

April 15, 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section 1 - Introduction

Introduction

Welcome to the VSR Training and Performance Support System (TPSS) Dependency Benefits Module. 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 course.

Section 1 of this guide is an introduction designed to present you with a broad overview of the Dependency Benefits 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 summaries for each of the lessons in the Dependency Benefits 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 Module?

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

> 📄 **Note:** The pretests are optional. Students who want to take the module may choose to take the pretest, or may choose to go directly to the module.

All students selected to take this module should take each lesson and topic, in sequence to ensure that he/she has (or gains) a comprehensive understanding of VSR provisions from start to finish.

Module Map

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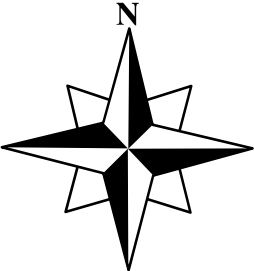
To get an overview of how the Dependency Benefits Module is laid out, take a look at the Module Map below.

As you can see, each module is comprised of lessons.

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                    │   Module 2      │      │ trainees must│
                    │  Dependency     │      │ take a Lesson│
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                    │   Dependency    │
                    │    Module       │
                    │  Introduction   │
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                    │    Lesson 1     │
                    │  Determining    │
                    │  Eligibility    │
                    │  Requirements   │
                    └─────────────────┘
                             │
                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │    Lesson 2     │
                    │ Development for │
                    │   Dependency    │
                    │     Claims      │
                    └─────────────────┘
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                    │    Lesson 3     │
                    │  Processing a   │
                    │ Claim for School│
                    │      Child      │
                    └─────────────────┘
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                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │   Module 2      │
                    │  Cooperative    │
                    │   Exercises     │
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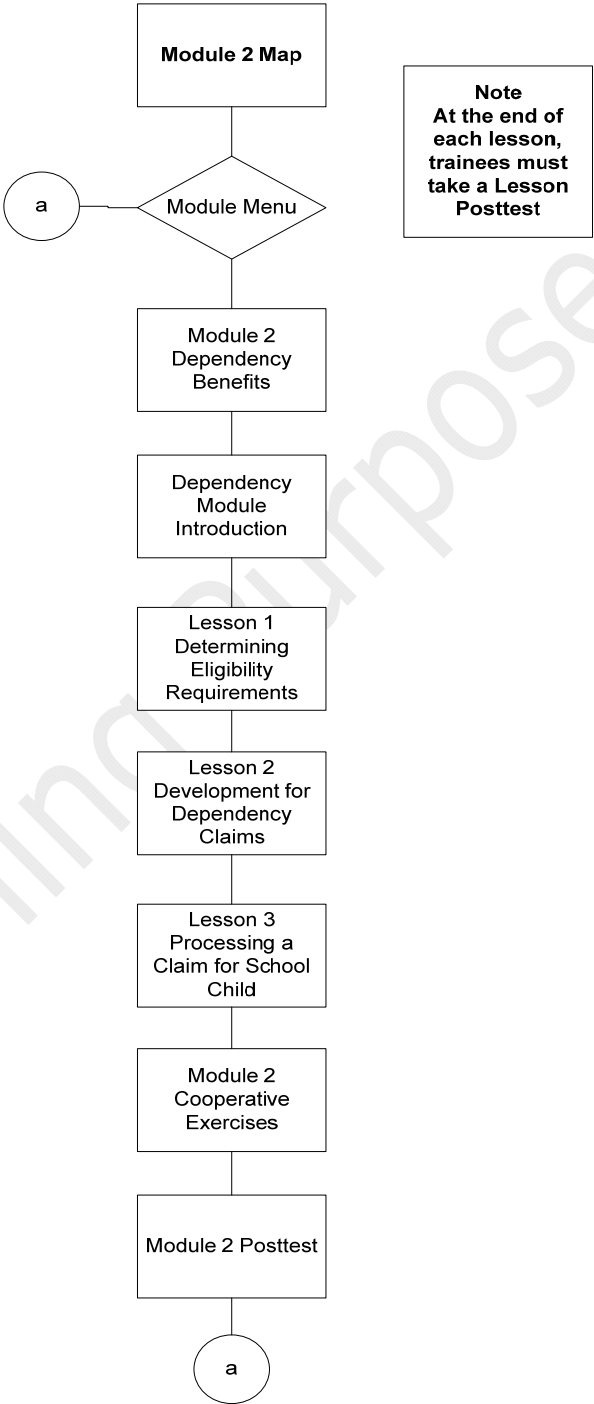
Learning Objectives

The module is divided into lessons which have objectives. A lesson objective builds upon the previous lesson's objective. Collectively, the lesson objectives represent the requirements of the module objective.

The module 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.

Whereas the lesson objectives detail the **action** of the task the students will learn, the **conditions** under which they will learn this task, the **standards** to be met in order to successfully perform the task, and the **time** it should take to complete the task addressed in the lesson.

Students' 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 module objective at the beginning of the module. At the beginning of all lessons, students will also be asked to read the corresponding lesson objectives.

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.

Module Test Design

Tests are designed to evaluate the students in an authentic or "real life" setting using cases or scenarios. The module pretests and posttests consist of various scenarios that the student must review in order to decide the next appropriate action.

The scenarios and evidence used in the tests are derived from actual claims 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.

When administering the module test you will assign test variants to the students. Instruct the students to take Variant 1 first and then Variant 2, if needed.

While you do need to administer the module test, you do not need to enter the test score. 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@.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 score and P or F, date, amount of time.

Lesson Test Design

Each lesson contains a computer-graded posttest. The computer pulls the items for the posttest and variant in random order from a bank of questions. Therefore, an infinite number of test variants can be generated. Each test contains several multiple-choice, knowledge-based questions, and was written to reflect every knowledge point deemed critical by a panel of SMEs. The lesson posttest will be delivered and scored online. Students will be required to pass the lesson posttest or variant(s) before moving on to the next module.

Lesson Test Procedures

Before Students take a Lesson 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 or variant and received their scores.

After Students Have Completed the Lesson Posttest: The computer presents students with the following:

- The overall posttest score.
- The question(s) that were missed.
- Any incorrect answer that was chosen.
- The correct answers.
- The topic to review.

Students who did not receive a passing score must take the variant of the posttest after remediation. They should review the answers that were incorrect. They should also review the topic(s) listed.

Note: Students need to write down the topic(s) (listed in blue) that need(s) to be reviewed. You cannot print while taking the lesson posttest. After remediation, students may retake the posttest as many times as necessary to achieve a passing score.

Lesson Test Remediation

If a student requires additional assistance after reviewing the questions he or she missed, you should provide additional training or information to fit each student's needs. Some options for remedial training include study of M21-1MR and review of selected topics in the lesson.

TPSS Materials

Everything that your students need to complete the Compensation Module is available to them within the module online. Once you provide 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 #1379361.

TPSS Equipment

Dual Monitors

The computers for the students should be set up with dual monitors so that the students 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:

"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 navigate between the case and the courseware by holding down the Alt key and the Tab key at the same time. Using the Alt-Tab feature allows you to toggle back and forth.

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.

As Students Take the Course

Make sure to carefully observe students as they go through the course to identify any participants who are struggling in a particular area. Early intervention is the key to student success in the course and in the posttests.

Also encourage students to read and follow the directions for the cooperative exercise very carefully.

Publications

Ensure that students have access to VSR reference materials, such as:

⇨ M21-1MR
⇨ 38 Code of Federal Regulations (38 CFR)
⇨ VBA Circulars
⇨ Regional Office Procedures

Reporting Feedback

Send in any feedback, reactions, comments (recommendations, additions, deletions) and any pertinent data which may be of use in improving this courseware by accessing the comments web form.

To 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

Dependency Benefits Module
The Module Master Planning Chart 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. **Note:** The estimated range of time required to complete the online content, including cooperative exercises and a single version of the Lesson Posttests, is 6 hours, 30 minutes to 10 hours, 30 minutes. The Module Posttest times ranged from 45 minutes to 1 hour, 15 minutes. The estimated total student course time ranges from 8 hours, 15 minutes to 11 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: **9 hours, 30 minutes** • Estimated total Student time for Module (aka, total "seat" time): **11 hours, 15 minutes** (**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: **3 hours, 15 minutes** (**Note:** This total includes the additional time required by the TC to perform briefings, feedback, and any administrative duties such as grading tests, 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.)

Duration		Activity	Notes/Tips
hrs	min		
	10	**Pretest Preparation**	Includes giving students access to the Dependency Benefits Module in TMS.
1	00	**Pretest**	Conducted prior to Day 1 of the training.
1	00	**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. 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.
	10	**Module Introduction**	Students read the module objective. Students are introduced to lessons contained in the module.
2	30	**Lesson 1**	• **Introduction** – Students will read lesson objective(s). • **Topic 1** – Dependency's Impact • **Topic 2** – Establishing the Relationship • **Topic 3 –** Dependency Eligibility Requirements

	5	**Computer-Graded Lesson 1 Posttest Briefing**	Includes time to review lesson objective and explain how to access the online computer-graded test to the students before they begin, as well as ensure students are ready to take the test.
	15	**Computer-Graded Lesson 1 Posttest**	Students access the test online. The computer grades the test and provides feedback. Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If a student fails the Lesson Posttest, he or she must review the computer-generated feedback and follow instructions for reviewing missed information until he or she feels confident to take a variant of the Lesson Posttest. The student may retake the computer-graded test as many times as necessary to pass.
1	30	**Lesson 2**	• **Introduction** – Students will read lesson objective(s). • **Topic 1** – Reviewing the Claim • **Topic 2** – Removing a Dependent • **Topic 3** – Adding a Dependent • **Topic 4** – Completing the Claim
	5	**Computer-graded Lesson 2 Posttest Briefing**	Includes time to review the lesson objective and ensure students are ready to take the test.
	15	**Computer-graded Lesson 2 Posttest**	Students access the test online. The computer grades the test and provides feedback. Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If a student fails the Lesson Posttest, he or she must review the computer-generated feedback and follow instructions for reviewing missed information until he or she feels confident to take a variant of the Lesson Posttest. The student may retake the computer-graded test as many times as necessary to pass.

2	30	**Lesson 3**	• **Introduction** – Students will read lesson objective(s). • **Topic 1** – Initial Review • **Topic 2** – Developing for Information • **Topic 3** – VSR Grant or Denial
	5	**Computer-graded Lesson 3 Posttest Briefing**	Includes time to review the lesson objective and ensure students are ready to take the test.
	15	**Computer-graded Lesson 3 Posttest**	Students access the test online. The computer grades the test and provides feedback. Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If a student fails the Lesson Posttest, he or she must review the computer-generated feedback and follow instructions for reviewing missed information until he or she feels confident to take a variant of the Lesson Posttest. The student may retake the computer-graded test as many times as necessary to pass.
1	15	**Dependency Benefits Cooperative Exercise**	Students will review several case scenarios to determine how to proceed with processing an original disability compensation claim. They will also complete a Self-Assessment. The Self-Assessment prompts students to: • Reflect on what they have learned in this module. • Measure their level of understanding of the concepts and procedures presented. • Assess how confident they feel about their ability to successfully process an original or reopened disability compensation claim.

	25	**Module Posttest Briefing**	Includes time for reviewing the results of the cooperative exercises, reviewing the module by reading the Lesson Summaries, and reviewing the module objective.
1	00	**Module Posttest, Variant 1**	
	45	**Module Posttest Grading, Variant 1 (if applicable)**	Scoring instructions and answer keys can be accessed in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	45	**Module Posttest Feedback, Variant 1 (if applicable)**	Note: Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If a student fails Variant 1 of 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 Variant 2 in the same way you administered Variant 1 of the Module Posttest and provide feedback based on the student's results of Variant 2.
1	00	**Module Posttest, Variant 2 (If applicable)**	
	45	**Module Posttest, Variant 2 Grading**	Scoring instructions and answer keys can be accessed in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	45	**Module Posttest, Variant 2 Feedback**	Note: Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If a student fails Variant 2 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 Notes

This section provides a summary of each lesson in the Dependency Benefits Module. Review the entire module by reading the following summary (or your own personalized version) before distributing 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 module before administering the module posttest.

The summaries begin on the next page.

Dependency Benefits Module Lesson Summaries

<u>Lesson 1 - Determining Eligibility Requirements</u>

In order to accurately verify a claimant's eligibility for dependency benefits, two criteria must be established in the following order:

- Relationship
- Dependency

Dependency can impact compensation benefits if the Veteran is evaluated at a 30% disabled rate or higher. The Veteran would be eligible to include his or her dependents on the award at this rate. This would results in an increase in the monthly payment.

You determine a spousal relationship by identifying the person who is married to the Veteran. For VA purposes, the person must be the opposite sex of the Veteran. The Veteran does not have to be living in order for the spouse to collect benefits. A surviving spouse can be established for death benefits if he or she can prove a valid marriage with the Veteran.

Pension is a benefit paid to live Veterans who are permanently and totally disabled from nonservice-connected injury or illness. Dependency impacts the amount of money a Veteran receives for pension benefits. The monthly award is affected by the number of dependents the Veteran has and the dependent's applicable income and net worth.

For VA purposes, a child is an unmarried dependent of the Veteran who is:

- biological child of the Veteran (legitimate or illegitimate),
- adopted child of the Veteran prior to the child's 18th birthday, or a
- stepchild who acquired stepchild status prior to age 18

The child must also be:

- under 18,
- between the ages of 18-23 if pursuing an approved course of education, or
- rated incapable of self-support.

As a VSR, you determine a parent to be a dependent if he or she is a:

- biological parent,
- adoptive parent, or
- foster parent.

For Pension, if the Veteran does not contribute to the child's support, does not live with the child or does not have legal custody, then the child is not a dependent for pension purposes.

For compensation, if the spouse does not live at the Veteran's home, you will need current information as to the location of the spouse before dependency can be determined. If the child does not live with the Veteran, you will need the name and address of the person taking care of the child before dependency can be determined. The exception is if the claimant furnishes evidence that child or spousal support payments are being made through a court or state agency.

Benefits can't be paid for a dependent unless the relationship is established. The issue of dependency is always secondary to that of relationship. If there is no relationship, there can be no dependency benefits.

<u>Lesson 2 - Development for Dependency Claims</u>

Certain items are required in order for the claim to be processed. Recall from the Compensation Module the following minimum requirements for a VA Form:
- Veteran's name
- Social Security number
- VA file number (if applicable)
- Claimant's signature
- Date stamp

If the claimant is receiving an income-based benefit, such as pension or parent's DIC, family income must be considered. Removal of the dependent may cause the family's countable income to decrease. This may cause an increase in payment, or a decrease that may result in an overpayment.

If you decide that there is a valid reason to remove the dependent, before you grant the request to remove, determine if benefits are currently being paid for the dependent. The easiest way to accomplish this task is by checking your electronic database.

A beneficiary has the right to be informed of a proposed adverse action so that he or she can offer evidence or argument to show why the proposed adverse action should not be taken. Therefore, unless authorized by specific exceptions, do not terminate, suspend or reduce benefits or take any adverse action without first sending the beneficiary a predetermination notice. This rule applies to all benefits.

If the claimant responds within the time limits and agrees with the proposed decision to remove the dependent from the award, then using your electronic database process the award. If the claimant does not agree with the proposed decision to remove the dependent from the award, then you must review the submitted evidence to determine if the proposed removal is still appropriate.

Once you confirm the relationship of the spouse or child, determine if the spouse or child is a valid dependent, and if so, you may grant the claim to add the dependent. If relationship was not determined after you have received all supporting documentation, then you will deny the claim without further development.

<u>Lesson 3 - Processing a Claim for School Child</u>

VA Form 21-674, Request for Approval of School Attendance, is used to initiate, or continue, entitlement to benefits based on the child attending an approved course of instruction, after the age of 18. This form must be signed by the claimant.

Once a child reaches the age of majority, (age 18 for VA purposes), that child can receive direct pay for the following benefits:
- DIC payments
- Death pension payments if there is no surviving spouse.

If the claimant submits VA Form 21-674, ensure that it contains the following:
- Claimant's name and address
- Veteran's name and SSN
- Veteran's service number, if applicable
- Date application was received
- Claimant's signature and date signed

Once you have reviewed the VA Form 21-674 for completeness, it is your responsibility to confirm that all of the necessary requirements for the claim have been met. This means that you may need to request evidence in order to complete the claim. The following requirements must be met to complete a school child adjustment:
- Dependency for VA Purposes- the child must be unmarried, and meet both the age requirement, and the relationship requirement.
- Benefit Requirements- specific requirements must be met for the dependent to be on the Veteran's award.
- Approved Course of Instruction- Do not award benefits based on school attendance unless the course of instruction or training meets the requirements specified for domestic or foreign cases.

As a VSR, you may deny a claim for a school child adjustment for the following reasons:
- No Existing Benefit
- Veteran Rated Less than 30% (Compensation cases)
- Income Requirements (Pension, Death Pension cases)
- Failure to Prosecute
- Relationship not Established
- Age Requirement not Met
- Child is Married
- Child not Enrolled in Approved Course of Instruction
- Child Is 18 Years or Older and In Receipt of Chapter 35 Benefits

Once you have completed the decision to deny the claim for school child adjustment, you will prepare the notification of the decision to deny.

If the claimant meets the dependency requirements for VA purposes, met the benefit requirements, and is attending an approved course of instruction, the VSR will grant the claim to adjust the Veteran's award. You will use the appropriate computer system at your RO to complete the grant process.