Training Coordinator's Module Guide for
Process an Original Claim for DIC Spouse/Child/Parent

June 27, 2013

For Training Purposes Only

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Section 1 - Introduction

Welcome to the *Process an Original Claim for DIC Spouse/Child/Parent* VSR Training and Performance Support System (TPSS). Please read this Module Guide in its entirety. Feel free print out a copy of this document if you want to highlight portions or write down notes as you read. Within these pages, you will find the information you need to successfully implement this module.

Section 1 of this guide is an introduction designed to present you with a broad overview of this module. It includes a map of the module so you can see the order of lessons and tests. And it provides you with some important information to pass along to your students.

Section 2 of this guide 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.

Section 3 of this guide contains summaries for each of the lessons in this 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.

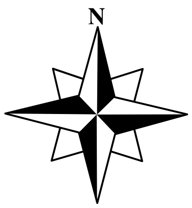
Who Will Take This Module?

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

> **Note:** The pretests are optional. Students who want to take a 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



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

As you can see, the module is comprised of four lessons. The students must take the lessons in the order that they are presented. A student may not proceed to the next lesson until they have successfully completed the previous lesson and completed the lesson posttest.

Module 7 Process an Original Claim for DIC Spouse/ Child/Parent

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Module Pretest (if applicable)

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Lesson 1
Establishing a Claim

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Lesson 1 Posttest

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Lesson 2
Determining Eligibility Requirements for DIC

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Lesson 3
Completing a VSR Grant or Denial for DIC

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Lesson 3 Posttest

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Lesson 4
Completing a Claim for DIC based on a Rating Decision

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Lesson 4 Posttest

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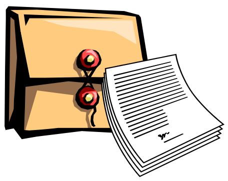
Module Posttest

Test Design



The 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.

Module Pretest

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.

The passing criteria for the module pretest are provided in the test directions/answer keys. You can access the test scoring instructions and answer keys from the VBA Learning Catalog. Search for TMS Item #1379374.

While you do need to administer the module pretest, you do not need to enter the test score. After you score the module pretest answer sheets and provide feedback to the students, you will email the module pretest scores to the TPSS Help Desk (**CDSHelpDesk@vba.va.gov**). You can email the module pretest 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 Posttests

There are two available variants of each lesson posttest. You must tell the students which variant you want them to take. If a student does not pass a lesson posttest, then the student must take that lesson posttest's variant.

The lesson posttests are designed to test the material specifically covered in each lesson. For the most part, instructions for the lesson posttests contain an Assumptions and Conditions section which informs the student of characteristics inherent to the cases used in the testing environment.

The passing criteria vary for each lesson posttest. The passing criteria for the lesson posttests are provided in the test directions/answer keys. You can access the test scoring instructions and answer keys from the VBA Learning Catalog. Search for TMS Item #1379374.

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

Module Posttests

The module posttest is designed to test the task of processing an original claim for accrued benefits from start to finish. The instructions for the module posttests contain an Assumptions and Conditions section which informs the student of characteristics inherent to the cases used in the testing environment.

There are three available variants of the module posttest. 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 then Variant 3, if needed. If a student does not pass a module posttest, then you will provide remediation and administer a variant of the test.

The passing criteria are provided in the test directions and answer keys. You can access the test scoring instructions and answer keys from the VBA Learning Catalog. Search for TMS Item #1379374.

While you do need to administer the module test, you do not need to enter the test score. After you score the module test answer sheets and provide feedback to the students, you will email the module test scores to the TPSS Help Desk (**CDSHelpDesk@vba.va.gov**). You can email the module test 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.

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 #1379374.

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:

"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.

Publications

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

- M21-1, Parts I and V
- 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 database 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

Process an Original Claim for DIC Spouse/Child/Parent

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 14 hours to 22 hours. The Module Posttest times ranged from 2 hours to 3 hours. The estimated total student course time ranges from 11 hours to 18 hours.

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: **15 hours, 5 minutes**
- Estimated total Student time for Module (aka, total "seat" time): **18 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: **6 hours**
(**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 the 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. (Note: The total time for test grading is assuming tests for students.) Module Pretest preparation and grading is not included in the total. 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 they are.)

Duration			
hrs	**min**	**Activity**	**Notes / Tips**
	10	**Module Pretest Preparation**	Includes giving student access to Process an Original Claim for DIC module in TMS.
1	**15**	**Module Pretest (optional)**	Conducted sometime prior to Day 1 of the training.
1	**00**	**Module Pretest Grading**	Scoring instructions and answer keys are in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	30	**Administrative Functions**	Includes emailing the 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.
	5	**Module Introduction**	Students read the module objective. Students are introduced to lessons contained in the module.
1	**45**	**Lesson 1**	• **Introduction -** Students will read lesson objective(s). • **Topic 1** – Initiating a Claim for DIC • **Topic 2** – Restoring DIC Benefits • **Topic 3** – Reopening DIC
	15	**Lesson 1 Posttest, Variant 1 Briefing**	Includes reviewing results of any cooperative exercises and ensuring that students are ready to take the test.
	45	**Lesson 1 Posttest, Variant 1**	Students access the test online and turn in any printed documents to TC for scoring.

Duration			
hrs	**min**	**Activity**	**Notes / Tips**
	30	**Lesson 1 Posttest, Variant 1 Grading**	Scoring instructions and answer keys are in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	15	**Lesson 1 Posttest, Variant 1 Feedback**	**Note:** Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If a student fails Lesson Posttest, Variant 1, you must provide remediation to the student until the student feels confident enough to take Lesson Posttest, Variant 2. At that time, you will administer Variant 2 to the student in the same way you administered the Lesson Posttest, Variant 1 and provide feedback based on the student's results of Variant 2.
	5	**Lesson 1 Posttest, Variant 2 Briefing (if applicable)**	Includes ensuring students have had enough feedback and remediation to feel prepared for Variant 2.
	45	**Lesson 1 Posttest, Variant 2 (if applicable)**	Students access the test online and turn in any printed documents to TC for scoring
	30	**Lesson 1 Posttest, Variant 2 Grading (if applicable)**	Scoring instructions and answer keys are in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	15	**Lesson 1 Posttest, Variant 2 Feedback (if applicable)**	**Note:** Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If the student who failed Lesson Posttest, Variant 1 also fails Variant 2, you may allow the student to progress to the next lesson. Make arrangements to provide additional assistance to that student before he or she takes the Module Posttest.
3	**45**	**Lesson 2**	• **Introduction -** Students will read lesson objective(s). • **Topic 1** – Eligibility Requirements • **Topic 2** – Developing for Information • **Topic 3** – Evaluating the Evidence of Record

Duration			
hrs	**min**	**Activity**	**Notes / Tips**
			• **Cooperative Exercise-** Students will review the case for Bruce D. Chester and determine if the eligibility requirements are met for DIC benefits.
	15	**Lesson 2 Posttest, Variant 1 Briefing**	Includes reviewing results of any cooperative exercises and ensuring that students are ready to take the test.
	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, Variant 1 Grading**	Scoring instructions and answer keys are in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	15	**Lesson 2 Posttest, Variant 1 Feedback**	**Note:** Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If a student fails Lesson Posttest, Variant 1, you must provide remediation to the student until the student feels confident enough to take Lesson Posttest, Variant 2. At that time, you will administer Variant 2 to the student in the same way you administered the Lesson Posttest, Variant 1 and provide feedback based on the student's results of Variant 2.
	5	**Lesson 2 Posttest, Variant 2 Briefing (if applicable)**	Includes ensuring students have had enough feedback and remediation to feel prepared for Variant 2.
	30	**Lesson 2 Posttest, Variant 2 (if applicable)**	Students access the test online and turn in any printed documents to TC for scoring
	30	**Lesson 2 Posttest, Variant 2 Grading (if applicable)**	Scoring instructions and answer keys are in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	15	**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 Lesson Posttest, Variant 1 also fails Variant 2, you may allow the entire group to progress to the next lesson. Make arrangements to provide additional assistance to that student before he or she

Duration			
hrs	**min**	**Activity**	**Notes / Tips**
			takes the Module Posttest.
1	**00**	**Lesson 3**	• **Introduction** – Students will read lesson objective(s). • **Topic 1** – VSR Grant or Denial of a Claim • **Cooperative Exercise** – Students will evaluate the evidence in the C-File and on the datasheet for Bronson D. Naslund to determine whether the VSR can grant or deny the claim for DIC benefits.
	15	**Lesson 3 Posttest, Variant 1 Briefing**	Includes reviewing results of any cooperative exercises and ensuring that students are ready to take the test.
	30	**Lesson 3 Posttest, Variant 1**	Students access the test online and turn in any printed documents to TC for scoring
	30	**Lesson 3 Posttest, Variant 1 Grading**	Scoring instructions and answer keys are in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	15	**Lesson 3 Posttest, Variant 1 Feedback**	**Note:** Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If a student fails Lesson Posttest, Variant 1, you must provide remediation to the student until the student feels confident enough to take Lesson Posttest, Variant 2. At that time, you will administer Variant 2 to the student in the same way you administered the Lesson Posttest, Variant 1 and provide feedback based on the student's results of Variant 2.
	5	**Lesson 3 Posttest, Variant 2 Briefing (if applicable)**	Includes ensuring students have had enough feedback and remediation to feel prepared for Variant 2.
	30	**Lesson 3 Posttest, Variant 2 (if applicable)**	Students access the test online and turn in any printed documents to TC for scoring
	30	**Lesson 3 Posttest, Variant 2**	Scoring instructions and answer keys are in the VBA Learning Catalog.

Duration			
hrs	**min**	**Activity**	**Notes / Tips**
		Grading (if applicable)	
	15	**Lesson 3 Posttest, Variant 2 Feedback (if applicable)**	**Note:** Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If the student who failed Lesson Posttest, Variant 1 also fails Variant 2, you may allow the entire group to progress to the next lesson. Make arrangements to provide additional assistance to that student before he or she takes the Module Posttest.
3	**45**	**Lesson 4**	• **Introduction** - Students will read lesson objective(s). • **Topic 1** – Interpreting a Rating Personnel Decision to Grant or Deny a Claim • **Topic 2** – Interpreting a Finance Report to Grant SMP for a Spouse/Child • **Topic 3** – Implementing a Rating Personnel Decision to Grant or Deny a Claim • **Cooperative Exercise** – Students will process a claim from start to finish based on the evidence in the C-File and on the datasheet for Carl D. Fleming.
	15	**Lesson 4 Posttest, Variant 1 Briefing**	Includes reviewing results of any cooperative exercises and ensuring that students are ready to take the test.
1	**00**	**Lesson 4 Posttest, Variant 1**	Students access the test online and turn in any printed documents to TC for scoring
	30	**Lesson 4 Posttest, Variant 1 Grading**	Scoring instructions and answer keys are in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	15	**Lesson 4 Posttest, Variant 1 Feedback**	**Note:** Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If a student fails Lesson Posttest, Variant 1, you must provide remediation to the student until the student feels confident enough to take Lesson Posttest, Variant 2. At that time, you will administer Variant 2 to the student in

Duration			
hrs	**min**	**Activity**	**Notes / Tips**
			the same way you administered the Lesson Posttest, Variant 1 and provide feedback based on the student's results of Variant 2.
	5	**Lesson 4 Posttest, Variant 2 Briefing (if applicable)**	Includes ensuring students have had enough feedback and remediation to feel prepared for Variant 2.
1	00	**Lesson 4 Posttest, Variant 2 (if applicable)**	Students access the test online and turn in any printed documents to TC for scoring
	30	**Lesson 4 Posttest, Variant 2 Grading (if applicable)**	Scoring instructions and answer keys are in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	15	**Lesson 4 Posttest, Variant 2 Feedback (if applicable)**	**Note:** Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If the student who failed Lesson Posttest, Variant 1 also fails Variant 2, you may allow the entire group to progress to the next lesson. Make arrangements to provide additional assistance to that student before he or she takes the Module Posttest.
	15	**Module Posttest, Variant 1 Briefing**	Includes time for reviewing the results of the cooperative exercises, reviewing the module by reading the Lesson Summaries, and reviewing the module objective. Includes assigning a test variant to each student.
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 (if applicable)**	Scoring instructions and answer keys are in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	45	**Module Posttest, Variant 1 Feedback (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

Duration			
hrs	**min**	**Activity**	**Notes / Tips**
			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.
	10	**Module Posttest, Variant 2 Briefing (If applicable)**	Includes time for reviewing the results of the cooperative exercises, reviewing the module by reading the Lesson Summaries, and reviewing the module objective. Includes assigning a test 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
	45	**Module Posttest, Variant 2 Grading (if applicable)**	Scoring instructions and answer keys are in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	45	**Module Posttest, Variant 2 Feedback (if applicable)**	**Note:** Feedback times will vary depending on the number of items a student missed. If a student fails the Module Posttest, Variant 2, 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 2and provide feedback based on the student's results of Variant 3.
	5	**Module Posttest, Variant 3 Briefing (If applicable)**	Includes time for reviewing the results of the cooperative exercises, reviewing the module by reading the Lesson Summaries, and reviewing the module objective. Includes assigning a test variant to each student.
2	00	**Module Posttest, Variant 3 (If applicable)**	Students access the test online and turn in any printed documents to TC for scoring
	45	**Module Posttest, Variant 3 Grading (If applicable)**	Scoring instructions and answer keys are in the VBA Learning Catalog.
	45	**Module Posttest, Variant 3**	**Note:** If a student fails Variant 3 of the Module Posttest, you must provide

Duration			
hrs	**min**	**Activity**	**Notes / Tips**
		Feedback (If applicable)	remediation until the student can demonstrate proficiency in the task.
	15	**Email TPSS Help Desk Based on Module Test Results**	

Section 3 - Lesson Summaries

Training Coordinator's Notes

This section provides a summary of each lesson in this module. Conduct a review with your students of the entire module by reading the following summaries (or your own personalized version) before telling them to take 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.

Lesson 1 –Establishing a Claim

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) is a monthly payment awarded to a Veteran's surviving spouse, child, or parent because of a service-connected death. There are two official forms used for submitting a claim for DIC:

- VA Form 21-534, Application for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, Death Pension, and Accrued Benefits by a Surviving Spouse or Child (Including Death Compensation)
- VA Form 21-535, Application for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation by Parent(s)

When completing VA Form 21-534, Application for DIC by a Surviving Spouse or Child, or VA Form 21-535, Application for DIC by Parent(s), the claimant should, at a minimum, furnish the following information:

- Deceased Veteran's name
- Social Security number or VA file number of the Veteran
- Claimant's signature

The first step in processing a claim for DIC includes assessing whether a claim can be processed. You can begin processing only when you receive a signed application from the claimant.

Next, you should check a claim's status. To verify the status of an application, you will check the C-File or access the electronic database at your RO. Be sure to keep the claimant informed of the current status of pending claims.

Once you have determined that a claim is ready to be processed, you will notify the claimant through an acknowledgement letter that the claim has been received and processing has begun.

Occasionally, you may receive an additional request for DIC which may not indicate a duplicate claim or duplicate evidence. These two other possibilities may include:

- A request to reopen a DIC claim
- A request to restore DIC benefits

When the claimant is notified of the decision for his or her original claim for DIC benefits, he or she is entitled to resubmit a claim in an attempt to either reverse a denied ruling, or increase the awarded level of benefits with Housebound or Aid and Attendance. New and material evidence related to the issues shown here may be presented to challenge a DIC denial

- Service Connection
- Line of Duty
- Character of Discharge
- Misconduct

If the claimant received DIC, but later became limited in his or her ability to leave the house or required care in a nursing home, then the claimant could apply for an additional allowance for Housebound or Aid and Attendance. This is one of the few circumstances that allow an additional payment of DIC.

You do not need to require a VA Form 21-534, Application for DIC by a Surviving Spouse or Child, or a VA Form 21-535, Application for DIC by Parent(s), to reopen a DIC claim.

DIC is one of only four VA benefits that can be restored after death, divorce, or annulment of a spouse. In order to restore the surviving spouse's benefits, you must require the following from the claimant:

- Documentary evidence of the divorce, death, or annulment
- Statement of all the claimant's marriages and indication of where, when, and how each was dissolved
- Statement of whether the claimant has ever filed an application or received VA benefits as spouse, or surviving spouse of any other Veteran. This would be indicated on VA Form 21-534.

Lesson 2 –Determining Eligibility Requirements for DIC

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) benefits are paid monthly to the surviving spouse, children, and parents of Veterans when any of the following occurs:

- The Veteran's death occurred in service.
- A Veteran dies of a service-connected disability.
- In certain circumstances, a Veteran rated totally disabled from a service-connected disability dies from a nonservice-connected condition.

The eligibility requirements for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation are service eligibility, relationship of claimant to Veteran, income requirements (parents only), and cause of death.

You must gather the following evidence needed to support the DIC claim.

- Evidence of Service Eligibility
- Evidence of Relationship
- Income Information
- Evidence of Service-Connected Cause of Death

You would obtain service, relationship, or income information from the following sources:

- Service Information - the claimant and the service department.
- Relationship Information - the claimant or from public records (with authorization).
- Income Information - the claimant.

For medical evidence for a DIC claim, you would obtain information from the following sources:

- STRs - the claimant and the service department
- PMRs - the claimant and the private medical provider
- VA Medical Evidence - the VA medical center

As a VSR, you are responsible for evaluating the evidence gathered in connection with a claim for DIC. You must determine from the evidence if eligibility requirements have been met so that you can complete the claim or submit the claim for a rating decision.

For service eligibility, you must verify that the claimant meets the specific requirements for active duty and character of discharge.

Evidence should be evaluated to verify that relationship is established between the Veteran and the spouse, child, or parent. If relationship cannot be established between the claimant and the Veteran, then the DIC claim must be denied.

Remember that the income for a parent seeking DIC should be calculated. Counting of income for Parent(s) DIC is similar to pension, except that you count income for Parent(s) DIC by calendar year rather than from date of claim.

Once service eligibility, relationship, and income (if applicable) have been verified, you must determine cause of death.

Cause of death issues might not only involve evidence of service connection. You might need to examine the Veteran's disability rating, length of disability, length of marriage, and so forth. By determining cause of death, you will be making one of the following decisions:

- Process the claim without forwarding it to the Rater
- Forward the claim to the Rater

Lesson 3 –Completing a VSR Grant or Denial for DIC

There are cases when the VSR can complete a claim for DIC without requiring a Rating Decision.

A VSR is authorized to deny a claim for DIC without a Rating Decision if the following occur:

- Basic Eligibility Requirements Not Met
- Death Results from Wrongful and Intentional Killing
- Requested Evidence Not Provided within a Time Limit

You are ready to make a decision on whether to grant or deny a claim if the following requirements are met:

- The claimant met the eligibility requirements.
- All the necessary information and documentation are included.
- The claim does not require a Rating Decision.

Once you have made a decision to grant or deny a claim for DIC without referral to the Rating Specialist, you must input the correct information into the appropriate system at your RO to reflect your determination. The type of information which needs to be entered is different depending on which DIC benefit is being paid.

Before you can complete the award for DIC, you must determine if you need to forward the claim to your Finance Office. This office contacts the service department to verify a surviving spouse's entitlement to the Survivor's Benefit Plan (SBP), a military insurance program. This plan can offset the amount of payment given to a surviving spouse entitled to DIC. Consider forwarding the claim to the Finance Office if there is any indication of SBP eligibility in the C-File. Good indicators are as follows:

- The DIC application, normally a VA Form 21-534, shows SBP entitlement.
- The discharge documents show retirement of the Veteran from service.
- Information pertaining to a Veteran who served 15 years or more could indicate retirement.

Once you have made a decision on a claim for DIC, you must inform the claimant of the decision and reason for the decision.

Lesson 4 –Completing a Claim for DIC Based on a Rating Decision

The Rater will return the C-File to the VSR either as a completed Rating Decision, or as a Deferred Rating Decision requiring further development before a final decision can be made.

Before processing the Rating Decision, you must verify the following information:

- Veteran's name matches the C-File
- VA File number/Veteran's SSN matches the C-File
- Date of Rating is present
- Signature of Rater is present

For a completed DIC case, there will be three outcomes for the Final Rating Decision:

- Service-connected death is granted
- Service-connected death is not granted
- Service-connected death is not granted, but DIC is granted under 38 USC 1318

The Rater may return a C-File to you with a VA Form 21-6789, Deferred Rating Decision. This occurs when the Rater determines that a claim requires additional evidence. Your actions for a deferred rating for cause of death are the same as for disability. If a decision for service connection of death is deferred, the C-File will be returned to you. You will then request the evidence asked for on the VA Form 21-6789 from the claimant in order to complete the claim.

Upon receipt of the evidence requested, resubmit the case to the Rater.

There are steps you must take prior to implementing the Rating Decision concerning the Survivor's Benefit Plan (SBP), a congressional mandate which can directly impact DIC benefits. The Survivors Benefits Plan (SBP), established by Congress under Public Law 92-425, is an insurance program paid to the survivors of a Veteran who either retired from one of the armed services, or was a commissioned officer from the Public Health Service or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Once DIC has been granted to a surviving spouse, you must consider the SBP entitlement before you can award payment. An application showing SBP entitlement, discharge documents showing retirement, or discharge documents showing that the Veteran served 15 years or more, are all conditions that should alert you that an SBP entitlement might exist.

If there is evidence in the file that the payee might be entitled to SBP for an original award of DIC, then the Finance Office must be notified. Normally, it is located at your RO. Cases that do not involve SBP entitlement do not need to be sent to the Finance Office. You may proceed with implementing the Rating Decision and completing the claim.

There are specific steps you must follow when notifying Finance of a possible SBP entitlement:

- STEP 1: Prepare DIC Award
- STEP 2: Send Information
- STEP 3: Review Report of Contact

After giving consideration to SBP entitlement, the VSR will implement the Rating Decision

If, upon receipt of the C-File from the Rater, you determine that the Rater denied the claimant's request for DIC, you must implement the decision to deny the claim. The VSR does not need to do anything with SBP entitlement since the claim has been denied. You only need to complete processing the denial. When processing a denial for DIC, you must enter the reason the DIC claim was denied in your electronic database. After entering the data into your electronic database, you will prepare the disallowance letter.

A DIC Grant will fall into one of the following categories:

- DIC Award: No indication of entitlement to SBP
- DIC Award: SBP entitlement but no amount to be recovered
- DIC Award: SBP entitlement with amount for offset

Once you are certain that there is no indication of SBP entitlement, you may process the DIC award without referring it to Finance.

If the Finance Report does not require an offset, then you may complete the award by performing the following steps:

1. Determine the amount payable, or input data into the electronic database.
2. Generate and print the award (VA Form 21-8947).
3. Create a notification letter.

If an SBP offset is required, you must go through the following procedures:

Step 1: Withhold SBP Offset Amount
Step 2: Return Claim to Finance
Step 3: Process the Award