(VSR Challenge)

Award Processing for Ratings (VBMS-A/RADL)

Trainee Handout

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Objectives

Upon completion of this lesson, you will be able to:

* Demonstrate the ability to access Web Help for VBMS-A
* Understand the functionality of VBMS-Awards (VBMS-A) for rating award action
* Utilize VBMS-A decision screens to promulgate awards for rating decisions
* Prepare the Redesigned Automated Decision Letter (RADL) in VBMS-A, including Centralized Printing procedures

References

* [M21-1, Part III, Subpart v, 2.A](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014229/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-v-Chapter-2-Section-A-Decision-Authorization), Decision Authorization
* [M21-1, Part III, Subpart v, 2.B](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014231/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-v-Chapter-2-Section-B-Decision-Notices), Decision Notices
* VBMS-A Web Help (accessed in VBMS-A)
* VBMS Awards User Guide (accessed in VBMS-A)

All M21-1 refrences are found in the [Adjudication Procedures Manual](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/topic/554400000003098/Chapter-06-The-Rating-Decision).

Topic 1: Utilizing VBMS-A for Award Generation

VBMS Awards was developed as a web-based enterprise application that VSRs use to generate awards on claims for VA benefits. It was designed to replace the Veterans Service Network (VETSNET) Awards application. These applications are used to commence, modify, or terminate payments and/or update the Corporate Record.

An award must be generated even if payment amounts are not changing, in order to update the Corporate Record and support the Redesigned Automated Decision Letter (RADL) function. Once the award and letter are generated, they will be routed to an Authorizer/Senior VSR for approval. Upon approval, the award is communicated to the Finance Accounting System (FAS) for payment.

***NOTE:***VBMS-A is continually being vetted. As such, certain screens, functionally and some specific information may have changed. Therefore, you should always refer to the current version of the VBMS-A user guide, which is located within the VBMS-A system.

**VBMS-A Navigation:**

Home Page, Web Help, and User Guide

The Home Page is the landing screen upon logging into VBMS-A. From here, clicking on the “V” icon next to the Home icon will open up VBMS Core. This is a good shortcut to use if you know that you’re going to use both programs. Open VBMS-A first, then click the “V” icon. You may or may not have to sign in again. You can do this at any time to open up VBMS Core.

You may also click on the Support Center button (open book icon) which will allow access to Web Help and the VBMS Awards User Guide. You can click on either of those if needed. If Web Help or VBMS Awards User Guide is not needed, skip this step and access the award.

You can access an award by entering the file number or Social Security number of a Veteran and selecting Search. You can also utilize the search functionality by entering the Social Security number of a beneficiary, dependent, or participant previously established in VBMS through a relationship with a Veteran.

*Records Found Screen*

Upon entering a file number or Social Security number on the Home Screen, the search results will display on the screen known as the Records Found screen. To access Award Data or Add New Award, select the appropriate link from the All Participants, All Awards, or All Claims list.

Clicking on the claimant’s name, the award type (Compensation/Pension Live), or the claim type, will take you to the All Awards screen; however, if there are names other than the claimant listed (such as dependents), be sure it’s the correct person whose award you wish to update.

*All Awards Screen*

* Displays existing award data about the Veteran or another beneficiary
* You can select from the following operations: *Record Decisions*, *Add New Award*, *Decision History*, *Award History*, or *Return to Awards Search*
* Occasionally, you will see other award tabs in addition to the Compensation/Pension Live tab, such as the Clothing Allowance award tab; be sure you are on the Compensation/Pension Live tab before proceeding

Awards Previously Generated in VBMS-A or VETSNET Awards

If an award ***has*** previously been generated in VBMS-A or VETSNET Awards, you will be taken directly to the main All Awards screen. If the Veteran has previously been paid, the All Awards screen will display existing award data about the Veteran or another beneficiary.

Awards ***Not***Previously Generated in VBMS-A or VETSNET Awards:

Upon entering a file number or Social Security number on a file that ***has not*** previously had an award generated in either VBMS-A or VETSNET Awards, you will be directed to the All Awards screen, and see a message that states, “There are no current or proposed awards for this person.” In such instances, the *Record Decisions* button will be greyed out, and you will need to click *Add New Award*.

Next, click on the *Award Type* drop down and choose Compensation/Pension Live. The file number and name should automatically populate. If not, add the file number and click *Validate File Number*. Make sure the information is correct before clicking *Accept*. If it’s not, or you determine you don’t want to add a new award, click *Abandon*. Clicking *Accept* will take you to the main All Awards screen.

***Note:*** **Do not** click *Add New Award*, when the *Record Decisions* button is available on a Compensation/Pension Live claim, as this will create a duplicate record.

*Record Decisions Screen*

* The Record Decisions screen contains all functions necessary for award generation
* You must make sure all appropriate claims have been moved to Selected Claims, before attempting to update the decision screens
	+ If there is only one available claim, it will already be moved to Selected Claims
	+ If there is more than one, you will have to manually move each one that is needed for the current award (may be one or multiple, depending on the actions being taken)
* Select from the list of decision screens on the left-side panel if any additional decisions are warranted
* Make all necessary decisions from the screens on the left ***before*** generating the award

Rating Screen

* Read only screen – Allows users to view rating information that has been imported from VBMS-R
* Disability Decision screen – Contains information about all individual contentions claimed
* Other Decisions screen – Contains information about Individual Unemployability, Permanent and Total, Competency, Ancillary decisions, etc.
* SMC Decision screen – Contains all decisions regarding SMC grants and denials

There are other issues and screens that may need to be considered when generating the award. The screens listed below are the most commonly used screens, along with a brief explanation. Each of these screens will be discussed in greater detail in separate lessons for the different types of adjustments.

Dependency Screen

* Indicates which dependents have been entered into VBMS-A, ***not*** necessarily which dependents have been added to the Veteran’s award
* You can add, edit, or delete dependents from the Veteran’s award from this screen (must generate an award for this to take effect)

Military Payment Info Screen

* Allows you to enter or modify Military Retired Pay and Discharge Pay
* Use the Retrieve BIRLS Data button to import the most recent information

Award Adjustments Screen

* Allows you to enter withholding amounts for Military Retired Pay, Disability Severance Pay, Separation Pay, Drill Pay, or other miscellaneous withholdings

*Award Generation*

After all necessary decision screens have been updated, you must generate the award. Click *Generate Award* to create a draft award that can be authorized by an SVSR/Authorizer. (If the award is already pending, then you may select *Review Current/Proposed* to review or return the award, or to generate the RADL.)

*Payment Address Verification*

After clicking *Generate Award*, you will be prompted to confirm the Payment Address.

* If correct, select *Continue Generation* to continue to the Current/Proposed screen
* To update or create Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) information, select *Enter EFT Address* and follow the prompts to update the information
* To cancel the generation process, select *Cancel Generation*

*Current/Proposed Screen*

* The *Return Award* button allows users to **take the award out of pending authorization status**
	+ Use this button if you need to make changes to the award
	+ **Do not** return the award if you are submitting for review/authorization
* Only SVSRs/Authorizers will have access to the *Authorize* button
* Select *Gen eDoc* to generate a draft award document that can be viewed and/or printed
* Select *Gen Letter* to view and edit the RADL

Topic 2: Redesigned Automated Decision Letter (RADL)

*Notification Letters*

The RADL function with VBMS-A provides for the automated generation of decision notices. Rules-based logic inserts, into the decision notices, system-generated language based on the specific decision(s) VA made on the Claim. The use of system-generated language allows for the standardization of decision notices, and streamlines the process for the end user.

The promulgation of a decision (rating or non-rating) in VBMS-A must occur ***before*** claims processors may generate a decision notice using RADL. This includes decisions that, in the past, VA had processed *without* making entries in an award-processing system, including confirmed and continued decisions, and denials on non-original claims. Generating the award first also allows both the RADL and/or Personal Computer Generated Letter (PCGL) to properly populate. If the RADL in incorrect or fails to generate a decision notice, you ***must*** use PCGL.

Claims processors may use RADL to generate a decision notice for most EPs to include: 110, 010, 020, 130, 160, 290, 310, 320, 600, 687, 689. 690, and 930. RADL *cannot* be used for certain types of claims to include some pension claims and duel claims – refer to [M21-1, Part III, Subpart v, 2.B.4.b-c](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014231/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-v-Chapter-2-Section-B-Decision-Notices#4).

***Note:*** Decision notices regarding a VA rating decision that claims processors generated using Automated Decision Letter (ADL) did *not* include a copy of the rating decision. In order to comply with the requirements of decision notification, ADL imported the rating information from VBMS-R into the decision notice. This approach changed on December 11, 2017, when Redesigned ADL (RADL) was deployed. Now, decision notices that notify a claimant of a rating decision *include* a copy of the rating decision narrative.

*Award Letter Interview Screen*

On the Award Letter Interview screen, perform additional development (if necessary), enter evidence (if needed), conduct centralized printing procedures, and preview the notification letter.

There are several tabs that need to be reviewed and/or updated in the Award Letter Interview screen. You may click the *Save* button at any point, but it must be clicked after all tabs have been updated and the award and letter are ready for review. After clicking *Save*, you will be taken out of the Award Letter Interview screen and back to Current/Proposed screen. Clicking *Return to Current/Proposed* in the Award Letter Interview screen will also take you back to the Current/Proposed screen. To get back into the letter to continue editing and reviewing, the click *Gen Letter* again.

Dependency Development

In order to complete dependency development from the Award Letter Interview screen, navigate to the Dependency Development tab and select *Add*. This action will activate the Dependency Development boxes. Input the dependent’s name into the field and select any of the provided issues to trigger the appropriate development language. To ensure your development is saved, select *Accept*, before continuing.

\*Best practice is to use this tab only when the current claim you’re working is an original claim, EP 010 or 110. In such instances, there would not be an EP 130 pending and one would not be established for control of the dependency issue.

If an EP 130 is pending separately from the non-original (other than 010 or 110) claim that you are currently working, it is most efficient to send a development letter in VBMS under the EP 130. This will ensure the tracked item(s) and suspense date are updated when the letter is finalized.

If there is a separate EP 130 pending, and you still choose to do the development in the notification letter of the rating EP, you will need to add free text to the letter informing the Veteran that VA will make a decision after 30 days, but he or she still has one year from the date of the letter to send in evidence. Additionally, you will need to manually add a tracked item and ensure the suspense date of the EP 130 is updated properly.

See [M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 5.L.1.e](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000032212/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-iii-Chapter-5-Section-L-Adjusting-Awards-for-Dependents#1d) for EP control when the dependency development was not completed up front and it’s needed at the time of rating promulgation.

Soliciting Claims

The RVSR may instruct the VSR, in the Special Notations box of the Rating Decision Codesheet, to solicit a claim for an unclaimed disability/condition for which the Veteran may be entitled service connection. You can create the development paragraph from the Soliciting Claims tab. Select the *Add* button and enter the name or title of the claim(s) being solicited and select *Accept*. This will add an additional paragraph in the notification letter asking the Veteran to please submit a completed VA Form 21-526EZ, Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits for that disability/condition.

Import Evidence List

The Import Evidence List tab is used to import any evidence that is available in the eFolder in VBMS Core. This documentation was either supplied by the Veteran, or collected by the VBA and uploaded into the system. A list of eFolder Evidence will show on the left-hand side of this tab. To add the evidence to the RADL, mark the check box next to the evidence and move to the Available Evidence list, by clicking *Add*. Any evidence that is added will be imported and associated with the RADL for the claim and appear on the Evidence List tab.

***Note:*** If the evidence is labeled incorrectly in the VBMS eFolder, it will be labeled incorrectly in this tab. Update all evidence in the eFolder prior to generating the award and RADL.

***Note:*** Only import evidence that is *in addition to* the Rating Decision evidence (e.g. dependency decisions, drill pay, etc.). **Do not** add the Rating Decision itself or evidence that is already listed within the Rating Decision Narrative as the Narrative is attached to the RADL for the claimant’s viewing.

Evidence List

The Evidence List tab is used to control all imported evidence added using the Import Evidence List tab. You are also able to add any evidence that could not be added through the Import Evidence List tab. If any evidence needs modification or deletion, you may do that here, as well. All documentation added can then be sorted to control how the evidence will appear in the notification letter.

Recipients

The Recipients tab allows you to enter the recipients to whom the notification should be sent (*Centralized Printing Procedures*). Recipients may include the Veteran/Fiduciary, Veterans Service Organization (VSO), private attorney, family member or another claimant, etc. If the Veteran has appointed a VSO or private attorney, a copy of the notification letter and the Rating Decision Codesheet ***must*** be provided to the organization/attorney. The Veteran and VSO/private attorney (if applicable) should show up on this tab automatically. If they don’t, you will need to add them manually.

1. Verify the Veteran’s name and address
2. Verify the POA/private attorney name and Local SOJ.
3. Using the paper/pencil icon next to the POA/private attorney name, add the address if the POA/private attorney is *other than* a VSO
4. Change the Delivery Method for the POA/private attorney to *Print Central*
5. Click *Accept* once all recipient information has been updated

***Note:*** The recipients entered here are only saved in the VBMS-A system and not saved in the Corporate Warehouse.

Enclosures

The Enclosures tab is used to add and organize the associated letter enclosures and to indicate to whom they will be sent (*Centralized Printing Procedures*). When generating an award based on a Rating Decision, the Narrative should show under this tab; the Part of Award Ltr column should have a “Y;” the Recipients column should say “All;” and there should be a “1” in the Number of Copies column.

If a VSO/private attorney is associated with the Veteran, you will need to add the Rating Decision Codesheet to the Enclosures tab. To do so, click *Add*; choose eFolder Document under the Document Type column; choose Rating Decision Codesheet – (mm/dd/yyyy) for the current Codesheet; choose “N” under the Part of Award Ltr column (the Codesheet ***does not*** get sent to the Veteran); choose the VSO/private attorney only, under the Recipients column; and the Number of Copies and Enclosure Order columns should both have “1” in them. Click *Accept* when done.

If any additional enclosures are needed, those can also be added here by clicking *Add* and choosing either “Standard Forms” or “eFolder Documents,” whichever applies. You do not need to add enclosures that will automatically be pulled into the letter based on the decisions made, such as VA Form 20-0998, “*Your rights to seek further review of our decision.*” You can see which forms are automatically attached by previewing the letter at any time.

Failure to Report for Exam

The Failure to Report for Examtab is used to indicate if the Veteran has missed a scheduled exam at any time. If the letter addresses one or more reductions based on failure to report for exam(s), the medical condition and diagnostic information will display for each exam missed. *Enter/Edit* an Exam Datefor each exam missed in the MM/DD/YYYYformat. When finished, click *Done*.

Partial Grant

The Partial Granttab allows you to specify a partial grant on certain end products. This information will populate in the letter to notify the recipient of their options to accept, appeal or inquire about the award decision. This tab is used under the appeals process.

Correspondence Summary

The Correspondence Summarytab provides a consolidated overview of all the *Recipients* and *Enclosures* that are in the letter package for each claimant.

Free Text

On the Award Letter Interview page, click the *Free Text* button at the bottom of the page. On the top right, select the *Reason for Entering the Free Text* information. At the top left, the user can choose from the following categories: Introduction, Dependency, or Your Benefits Information. Choosing the section will determine where in the letter the free text is entered. The maximum allowable character’s is 5000. When finished entering the information, click the *Save* button to save all data.

Free Text should only be used when system-generated language is *insufficient*. If system-generated language is *incorrect*, the user ***should not*** use the RADL and instead revert to PCGL for notification.

Preview Letter

On the Award Letter Interview page, click the *Preview Letter* button at the bottom of the page. The application will open a separate browser tab displaying the generated letter for preview. Ensure that all necessary information and enclosures are included and correct. Do not assume that the information that is supposed to be in the letter is there. Due to computer glitches that sometimes occur, the RADL may not generate properly.

***Note:*** If the RADL draft does not generate when *Preview Letter* is clicked and the user receives an error message, the user will need to revert to PCGL for notification.

Click *Save* after updating all tabs and previewing the letter. This will save the changes and return you to the Current/Proposed screen.

*Final Actions*

Once the award and RADL have been generated, reviewed, and determined ready for authorization, ***DO NOT*** click *Return Award*. Doing so will take the award out of pending authorization status as if the award was never generated. Instead, click *Return to Search* in the bottom right of the Current/Proposed screen or *Awards Home* at the very top of the VBMS-A window. Both options will take you back to the main VBMS-A Home Page. If you want to review other items on the Record Decisions screen, instead of clicking either of the previous options, you can click *Return to Record Decisions* while still on the Current/Proposed screen.

Once done with these actions, the claim will be reviewed by an SVSR/authorizer. If correct, he or she will authorize the claim. If incorrect, he or she will hit *Return Award* and route back to you for correction.

Practical Exercise

**Directions:** Using the training materials provided, answer the following questions.

1. What are the four screens on the Record Decisions screen, commonly used in conjunction with an award based on a rating decision?
2. If the Veteran is potentially entitled to an additional benefit, such as service connection for a broken right ankle, which tab on the Award Letter Interview screen would you go to, to inform the Veteran?

1. Where would you find the most up to date information concerning the functionality of VBMS-A?
2. Once a VSR has generated an award, what button must they click if they need to correct a mistake made on one of the decision screens?

1. True/False? All EPs are compatible with the RADL function in VBMS-A?
2. To ensure your work is saved on the VBMS-A decision screens, which button do you select?

1. Which 2 tabs on the Award Letter Interview screen must be updated to comply with Centralized Printing Procedures?

Attachment A: Sample RADL

This is a sample of the first page of a RADL letter. The letter will also include the monthly entitlement amount with the rates, dates, reasons, and withholdings (if applicable); as well as the items listed on the right side under “We have included with this letter:”



***Note***: Due to the length of an RADL, only the first page is shown. Veteran noted in the letter is not an actual Veteran – demo Veteran only.