Monthly Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) and

Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES)

Conference Call Read Ahead

Compensation Service

BDD/IDES (212A)

January 12, 2020 — 2 PM ET

The Compensation Service BDD/IDES hosts this call to announce updates and address issues and questions related to the BDD/IDES Programs. All Military Services Coordinators (MSCs), Disability Rating Activity Sites (DRAS), Regional Offices and other VA personnel supporting BDD/IDES are invited to participate.

This read-ahead is provided to facilitate discussion during the conference call.

The Call Notes from the previous month’s call will be an appendix to the current month’s Read Ahead (there is no longer a separate Call Notes document). There are no Call Notes for the November Call. The TMS # for this month’s call will be provided during the call and should be active with-in a week of the call’s completion. A Calendar Blast will notify the field when the TMS # is active.

**Call-in Information**

[Join Microsoft Teams Meeting](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3Ameeting_MzlhN2FlN2YtYTFhNS00NjExLWEwMzMtYWEwYjE0YzU1Y2Qx%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22e95f1b23-abaf-45ee-821d-b7ab251ab3bf%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22a0338b5c-0526-4e13-9809-5d0ecc8cdeb8%22%7d)

+1 872-701-0185  United States (Toll)

Conference ID: 448 196 643#

The Read Ahead and Slides will be attached to the Chat (may have to scroll up in the Chat) and can also be found in the Files link on the call as well as on the [IDES Homepage](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/vbadod/IDES.asp) and on the [BDD Homepage.](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/vbadod/predischarge.asp)



The Teams Chat will not be used for questions/comments after the call starts. Ask questions over the phone or send an email to the appropriate staff corporate mailbox.

Please mute your microphone and turn off your camera by clicking on the appropriate icon. (See Figure 1)

Figure 1:

Below (Figure 2) is what your microphone icon should look like when it is muted and the camera is off. Click the microphone icon to unmute if you need to ask a question (do not unmute if you do not need to speak).

Figure 2:



If you are dialed in via your phone, ensure your phone is muted.

Please sign–up for the [C&P Calendar Subscription Service](http://vbacodmoint1.vba.va.gov/bl/21/calendar/cal_Subscribe.asp) to receive notification that the Read Ahead is available and for notification when the TMS number is active.

COVID-19 Topics for Discussion

**COVID-19**

This continues to be a very difficult time. Please remember that things are very fluid, and some changes/decisions are happening as we speak. We appreciate your patience, flexibility and support. Contact the BDD Mailbox or IDES Mailbox as needed.

Phase 3 Exam Resumption by QTC/VES and Other Exam Info

Below is a reminder of current exam info.

* Phase 1 – Out-patient C&P examinations can be completed that do not require the removal of PPE
* Phase 2 – Out-patient and in-patient C&P examinations can be completed that do not require the removal of PPE
* Phase 3 – All C&P examinations can be completed, and PPE removed

All of the country is in Phase 3, however, COVID is fluid and changes may happen quickly based on state and/or local rules.

The most recent list of the Phase 3 locations is on the [IDES Homepage](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/vbadod/IDES.asp).

<https://benefits.va.gov/compensation/claimexam.asp> can be used to see if exams have resumed in an area. Enter the zip code and it provides a status of that location. Overseas locations are also shown.

Notes:

1. VHA Executive in Charge and USB guidance remains that all BDD/IDES exams are to be ordered through QTC/VES. An email was sent from OFO to the Districts on October 21 in reference to this guidance. VHA will not be used, even if you have a pre-COVID local agreement with VHA. Any recent agreements between an RO and a VAMC are not allowed. Any concerns on pending QTC or VES exams should be submitted to VAVBAWAS/CO/Contract Examination Inquiries and cc the IDES Mailbox or BDD Mailbox.
2. Any pending exam requests that are in CAPRI should be cancelled, to include those from before or the early days of COVID. If those exams have not been re-ordered through QTC/VES, they should be.
3. Keep your DoD counterparts informed on the latest exam guidance.

Claiming Exposure to COVID-19

Exam Providers have returned several ESRs with the claimed condition of “COVID exposure” for clarification. MSCs are reminded that exposure is not a disability. As per [M21-1 IV.ii.2.A.1.c](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014324/M21-1%2C-Part-IV%2C-Subpart-ii%2C-Chapter-2%2C-Section-A---Deciding-Claims-for-Disability-Compensation#1). (Claims Mentioning Exposure but Not Specifying a Disability), a claim mentioning exposure, but not specifying a disability from the exposure is not substantially complete. If a Service member (SM) claims COVID or COVID exposure, the MSC should clarify and ask the SM to indicate what specific disabilities they are claiming as a result of the exposure. When COVID “exposure” is claimed, but the SM does not specify a disability and does not wish to remove the contention from the application, the MSC must list COVID on the exam request with a note indicating:

* That no specific disability is claimed relating to COVID exposure
* Whether the SM is/is not currently positive

Including this information in the ESR may prevent the need for a return for clarification from the examiner.

Note: Please see [M21-1 III.iii.1.B.1.c.](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000014152/M21-1%2C-Part-III%2C-Subpart-iii%2C-Chapter-1%2C-Section-B---Evidence-Requested-From-the-Claimant#1) Clarifying Issues and Claims if needed.

General Topics for Discussion

**VA Form 21-526EZ**

MSCs are reminded that the current version of VA Form 21-526EZ is the version dated September 2019. No other version should be used.

Note: a version of VA Form 21-526EZ (version April 2020) has erroneously appeared in circulation and must not be used. Further guidance is forthcoming regarding handling claims with April 2020 version 526EZ that were previously accepted and processed.

**Requesting DBQs in Cases Involving PTSD and Additional Mental Health Issues**

As discussed during the November Teleconference, when IDES/BDD SMs claim PTSD along with additional mental health issues, all claimed mental health conditions should be listed as contentions, but only the PTSD DBQ should be ordered; all other mental health contentions should be associated with PTSD DBQ.

***Exception:*** when eating disorders are claimed—an eating disorder DBQ **must** be requested.

Similarly, if both hearing loss and tinnitus are claimed, both contentions should be listed, but only the [Hearing Loss and Tinnitus](http://vbacoweb03.dva.va.gov/bl/21/DBQ/docs/InternalDBQs/HearingLoss_and_Tinnitus.pdf) DBQ should be selected.

**Requesting the GENMED Separation Health Assessment (SHA) and Specialist Exams**

The [SHA](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000053562/M21-1%2C-Part-III%2C-Subpart-iv%2C-Chapter-3%2C-Section-F---Examinations-in-Special-Situations#4b) is a single separation examination which supports the VA disability compensation process and the Department of Defense (DoD) separation/retirement process. The SHA is conducted by VA and is reserved for SMs participating in the BDD or IDES programs.

The SHA provides SMs with an improved general medical examination, which includes: an audiogram, any specialty examinations deemed necessary, and a full lab analysis, using VA’s examination protocols.

An SHA examination will be requested along with any needed [specialist examinations](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000015809/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-iv-Chapter-3-Section-A-Examination-Requests-Overview#6) (hearing, vision, dental, psychiatric, and [TBI](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000015812/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-iv-Chapter-3-Section-D-Examination-Reports?query=tbi#2j)) for BDD/IDES SMs. However, when requesting the SHA *do not* specify that the examiner also complete individual [specialty examinations](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000015809/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-iv-Chapter-3-Section-A-Examination-Requests-Overview#1h) for each claimed disability. The SHA directs the examiner to fully evaluate any disability that is found or suspected according to the applicable disability benefit questionnaires (DBQs). This policy applies to examinations requested from VHA, as well as from private providers under VA contract.

SHA, specialty, and specialist examinations are defined in [M21-1 III.iv.3.F.4.b](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000053562/M21-1%2C-Part-III%2C-Subpart-iv%2C-Chapter-3%2C-Section-F---Examinations-in-Special-Situations#4b), [M21-1 III.iv.3.A.1.h](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000015809/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-iv-Chapter-3-Section-A-Examination-Requests-Overview#1h), and [M21-1 III.iv.3.A.1.i](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000015809/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-iv-Chapter-3-Section-A-Examination-Requests-Overview#1i) respectively. [M21-1 III.iv.3.D.2.j.](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000015812/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-iv-Chapter-3-Section-D-Examination-Reports?query=tbi#2j) discusses the qualifying specialist who may determine the initial diagnosis of TBI.

Download of DBQs From Vendor Portals Will No Longer Be Permitted

During last month’s Exam Liaison Call, the Medical Disability Examination Office (MDEO) presented that the downloading of DBQs from vendor portals will no longer be permitted. Per MDEO, DBQs in these portals are not certified as complete by the MDE examiners. Please refer to TMS# 4562589 (slides 7 & 8), your station Exam Liaison(s), or ContractExam.VBAVACO@va.gov for additional information.

IDES Specific Topics

**HAIMS to VBMS STRs/DBQs Transfer Training Schedule**

The Compensation Service IDES Program Office (212A) will conduct **HAIMS to VBMS STRs/DBQs Transfer Training** to **all** Regional Office MSCs and personnel that conduct IDES development actions. This new procedure is scheduled to be implemented on Monday, February 1, 2021.

The training will be conducted by District starting on **Wednesday, January 13, 2021 and January 14, 2021.** A make-up session will be conducted on Thursday, January 21, 2021. Please ensure MSCs, MSC Supervisors and personnel that conduct IDES development actions attend the training session assigned to their District on the appropriate date.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **District** | **Date** | **Time** | **Time Zone(s)** |
| Northeast [Click here to join the meeting](https://gcc01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/ap/t-59584e83/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fteams.microsoft.com%2Fl%2Fmeetup-join%2F19%253ameeting_ZTEwM2EyZWQtODkzOC00NWZjLTg2MmItMmUyYTBjZTQ3MmNh%2540thread.v2%2F0%3Fcontext%3D%257b%2522Tid%2522%253a%2522e95f1b23-abaf-45ee-821d-b7ab251ab3bf%2522%252c%2522Oid%2522%253a%2522b14d4e2b-3f11-4ebb-84b9-6a219f86f296%2522%257d&data=04%7C01%7C%7Cccfdaad6e2ce47a010a208d8b341fc6a%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637456443268729424%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=0tqzE4XGev%2BRNyQD4w%2BN%2B9Z5yQXZclqLi9%2F01MpSCpA%3D&reserved=0) **Or call in (audio only)** +1 872-701-0185,,926087973# Phone Conference ID: 926 087 973#  | Wednesday January 13, 2021 | 9:00am to 12:00pm8:00am to 11:00am | ESTCST |
| Continental[Click here to join the meeting](https://gcc01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/ap/t-59584e83/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fteams.microsoft.com%2Fl%2Fmeetup-join%2F19%253ameeting_Nzc3ZDE2NjYtM2VmMy00ZTJjLTgyODYtMDA4YzU2OTQyNTE1%2540thread.v2%2F0%3Fcontext%3D%257b%2522Tid%2522%253a%2522e95f1b23-abaf-45ee-821d-b7ab251ab3bf%2522%252c%2522Oid%2522%253a%2522b14d4e2b-3f11-4ebb-84b9-6a219f86f296%2522%257d&data=04%7C01%7C%7Cfe5684a77b05426b49ef08d8b3426fc8%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637456445201764086%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=L5vSPQJeNPGyPqR4c5phETY8hpOAXgkgXoFkh64uW3Q%3D&reserved=0) **Or call in (audio only)** +1 872-701-0185,,318790451# Phone Conference ID: 318 790 451# | Wednesday January 13, 2021 | 1:00pm to 4:00pm12:00pm to 3:00pm11:00am to 2:00pm10:00am to 1:00pm | ESTCSTMTPT |
| Southeast[Click here to join the meeting](https://gcc01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/ap/t-59584e83/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fteams.microsoft.com%2Fl%2Fmeetup-join%2F19%253ameeting_MzgxMDFjMjQtMTI1ZS00NzY5LThhZGUtNGMyMzE3OTllMTFi%2540thread.v2%2F0%3Fcontext%3D%257b%2522Tid%2522%253a%2522e95f1b23-abaf-45ee-821d-b7ab251ab3bf%2522%252c%2522Oid%2522%253a%2522b14d4e2b-3f11-4ebb-84b9-6a219f86f296%2522%257d&data=04%7C01%7C%7C146ff81198024c4d288008d8b3433b88%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637456448621367217%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=0%2FNvY8yhQ5tYFbaOEky3yYxL94okJF2WU%2Fh3pzHOIwE%3D&reserved=0) **Or call in (audio only)** +1 872-701-0185,,302823647# Phone Conference ID: 302 823 647#  | Thursday January 14, 2021 | 9:00am to 12:00pm8:00am to 11:00am | ESTCST |
| Pacific (including Alaska and Hawaii)[Click here to join the meeting](https://gcc01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/ap/t-59584e83/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fteams.microsoft.com%2Fl%2Fmeetup-join%2F19%253ameeting_NTBmOGY4ZGQtZTMyZS00ZTQ1LThiMTktNGFjYjg2YWVmYjZm%2540thread.v2%2F0%3Fcontext%3D%257b%2522Tid%2522%253a%2522e95f1b23-abaf-45ee-821d-b7ab251ab3bf%2522%252c%2522Oid%2522%253a%2522b14d4e2b-3f11-4ebb-84b9-6a219f86f296%2522%257d&data=04%7C01%7C%7Ccc57313927f749d314b908d8b34391e5%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637456450072291546%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=pqd4HMoVwdnEgmA6IuaEadZBbg71E4aI2L%2FUZgKHOnQ%3D&reserved=0) **Or call in (audio only)** +1 872-701-0185,,618936660# Phone Conference ID: 618 936 660#  | Thursday January 14, 2021 | 1:00pm to 4:00pm11:00am to 2:00pm10:00am to 1:00pm10:00am to 1:00pm8:00 am to 11:00am | ESTMTPTAKDTHST |
| Make-up Training[Click here to join the meeting](https://gcc01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/ap/t-59584e83/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fteams.microsoft.com%2Fl%2Fmeetup-join%2F19%253ameeting_Y2FiZjEyMjktMGEyZS00Y2VkLWI1NTEtNzFiZjJlMzM0ZWFi%2540thread.v2%2F0%3Fcontext%3D%257b%2522Tid%2522%253a%2522e95f1b23-abaf-45ee-821d-b7ab251ab3bf%2522%252c%2522Oid%2522%253a%2522b14d4e2b-3f11-4ebb-84b9-6a219f86f296%2522%257d&data=04%7C01%7C%7C0cfce0e56a0c4626f51a08d8b3449cc0%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637456454546917020%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=1MkSQoUG%2FfengcWdywphzyQaRVzjUudBSj0PGBu7SJY%3D&reserved=0) **Or call in (audio only)** +1 872-701-0185,,343199274# Phone Conference ID: 343 199 274# | Thursday January 21, 2021 | 9:00am to 12:00pm8:00am to 11:00am | ESTCST |
| Make-up Training (including Alaska and Hawaii)[Click here to join the meeting](https://gcc01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/ap/t-59584e83/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fteams.microsoft.com%2Fl%2Fmeetup-join%2F19%253ameeting_YzQzMDI3ZjItZWJkYy00M2JhLWI3ZDMtZDc4ZDEzYWEwMmY4%2540thread.v2%2F0%3Fcontext%3D%257b%2522Tid%2522%253a%2522e95f1b23-abaf-45ee-821d-b7ab251ab3bf%2522%252c%2522Oid%2522%253a%2522b14d4e2b-3f11-4ebb-84b9-6a219f86f296%2522%257d&data=04%7C01%7C%7Cac4b0460ba3e42cb298308d8b344f057%7Ce95f1b23abaf45ee821db7ab251ab3bf%7C0%7C0%7C637456455950747699%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=M1G4mZCRY6nqs33EYy1bhECrG4D1g675ais9FEO8dzQ%3D&reserved=0) **Or call in (audio only)** +1 872-701-0185,,376784246# Phone Conference ID: 376 784 246#  | Thursday January 21, 2021 | 1:00pm to 4:00pm11:00am to 2:00pm10:00am to 1:00pm10:00am to 1:00pm8:00 am to 11:00am | ESTMTPTAKDTHST |

The training materials for this new procedure will be disseminated to the Districts **NLT COB Monday, January 11, 2021**. Please direct any IDES questions to IDES.VBACO@VA.GOV.

Disenrollment Letters for Return To Duty (RTD) Cases

MSCs are reminded of the required actions in cases involving IDES SMs who are found fit and RTD or are disenrolled from IDES for any other reason (to include administrative and other non-medical discharges).

Once the MSC is notified that an IDES SM is RTD or DoD disenrolls the SM from IDES for any other reason, the MSC must complete the following:

* prepare the appropriate letter,
* provide it to the SM during the exit interview or mail it if exit interview is not completed
* upload letter in VBMS eFolder
* enter the RTD letter date in VTA
* clear the pending EP 689

Completing the actions above is critical to ensure that the SM understands the disposition of the VA claim they filed in IDES. When MSCs fail to take the actions above, SMs often mistakenly assume that their VA claim remains pending and are unaware of the necessary actions to file a VA claim, post-IDES.

The IDES program office is working on enhancements in VTA to keep cases that fall into this category open longer in VTA so the MSC entries can be completed. In the interim, if the case has been disenrolled in VTA, the MSC **must** still complete the above actions and should add a note in VMBS. [M21-1 III.i.2.E.2.a](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000046269/M21-1%2C-Part-III%2C-Subpart-i%2C-Chapter-2%2C-Section-E---Department-of-Veterans-Affairs-%28VA%29-Responsibilities-Based-on-Medical-Evaluation-Board-%28MEB%29-and-Physical-Evaluation-Board-%28PEB%29-Outcomes) outlines the required MSC actions in detail.

Needed Documents to PEBLO Immediately Following the Initial Interview

Our office received communications through the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense

(Health Affairs) that PEBLOs were not timely receiving needed documents. Reportedly, PEBLOs had to formally request documents from MSCs.

As described in [M21-1 III.i.2.D.5.a.](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000033257/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-i-Chapter-2-Section-D-Overview-of-the-Integrated-Disability-Evaluation-System-IDES-and-Initial-Claims-Development#5a), immediately following the initial meeting with an IDES SM, at minimum MSCs will provide the SMs PEBLO:

* a copy of the completed VAF 21-526EZ, Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits, or a copy of the notice that the SM declined to submit a VA claim (if applicable), and
* a list of the examinations and/or medical opinions necessary to evaluate both the referred and claimed disabilities, with the exception of those disabilities that are not subject to examination for IDES purposes (see [M21-1 III.i.2.D.6.d](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000033257/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-i-Chapter-2-Section-D-Overview-of-the-Integrated-Disability-Evaluation-System-IDES-and-Initial-Claims-Development#6d)). The VAF 21-2507, Request for Physical Examination, or VBMS’s Exam Scheduling Request (ESR) for all referred/claimed disabilities will suffice for the needed list of examinations.

Selection of Proper Intake Site During Claims Establishment

MSCs are reminded when establishing the EP 689 in IDES cases, the Intake Site Field must be entered to reflect the name of the MEB MTF (per [M21-1 III.i.2.D.3.d](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000033257/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-i-Chapter-2-Section-D-Overview-of-the-Integrated-Disability-Evaluation-System-IDES-and-Initial-Claims-Development#6d), step 1). This is required in all IDES cases, regardless of where the SM resides. It is **not** appropriate to select “Other Pre-Discharge Intake Site” in any IDES claim.

Careful attention to the intake Site field at CEST critical to ensure that accurate data collection; this is particularly important to ensure that the exam management reporting tools associate all cases with correct intake site.

Identifying Completed QTC Exams using Posted Cases Report in ExamTrack

[M21-1 III.i.2.D.7.a.](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000033257/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-i-Chapter-2-Section-D-Overview-of-the-Integrated-Disability-Evaluation-System-IDES-and-Initial-Claims-Development#6d) requires MSCs to run the Pending Medical Evaluation Stage report and follow up on any cases pending over 32 days. However, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of cases currently pending in the medical evaluation stage remains at significantly higher than normal levels, and following up on each outstanding case may not be feasible or practical. This requirement should be considered suspended until further notice.

To more efficiently manage this inventory, and to ensure timely action is taken on cases with completed exams, MSCs must utilize the Posted Cases Report in ExamTrack. This report will show all cases with completed and released exams within a specified time period.

MSCs must run the report (per the instructions in the table below) on a regular, recurring basis--**no less than once per week.** For each case that appears on the report, MSCs must take the actions outlined in [M21-1 III.i.2.D.7.c and d.](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000033257/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-i-Chapter-2-Section-D-Overview-of-the-Integrated-Disability-Evaluation-System-IDES-and-Initial-Claims-Development#6d)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Step | Action |
| 1. | Log into [QTC Exam Track](https://vbaclient.qtcm.com/my.policy) |
| 2. | Go to the “Real Time Reports” Option on the home page header and select “Cases Posted” from the dropdown options.  |
| 3. | From the “Locations” options, select the IDES intake site. |
| 4.  | In the “Start Date” field, enter the date the report was last run. ***Exception:*** For initial run, enter the 12/1/2020. **Rationale:** OFO recently coordinated a clean-up effort to ensure action has been taken on exams released before 12/1/20.  |
| 5.  | In the “End Date” field, enter the current date.  |
| 6.  | From “Exam Settings” options, select “DES” |
| 7. | Click “Search” This will generate a report showing all scheduled QTC exams that have been released in the specified time frame. **Note:** To save this report: * Click the green “arrow” on the Export drop down menu:
* Select *Download to CSV*
 |

Sharing QTC Exam Scheduling Report with PEBLOs

On January 6, 2021, OFO sent an email to all Districts directing that effective January 11, 2021, PEBLOs must be informed of the dates and times of VA examinations to ensure command/MEB situational awareness. As such, each VA intake site supporting IDES operations will provide this information in accordance with the guidance posted on the [IDES Homepage](https://vbaw.vba.va.gov/vbadod/IDES.asp) under “What’s New”.

Allowable Use of VHA for Contract Exclusion Issues

As a general rule, all IDES exams must be requested using VBA-contract vendors; however, when contentions are associated with contract exam exclusions, the request for that particular issue must be submitted to VHA via CAPRI. There is no need for an MSC to request permission to use VHA in these circumstances. When an MSC orders excluded exams through VHA, an email will be sent to the IDES Mailbox with the VTA case # and the reasoning for ordering exams through VHA. Contact the IDES Mailbox with any questions.

**Contract Examination Exclusions**

Circumstances under which contract examinations ***must not*** be requested include, but are not limited to, the following:

* Former Prisoner of War (FPOW) Protocol Examination is required
* Examination requires hospitalization or surgical evaluation, such as colonoscopy or laparoscopy
* Veteran is an inpatient at a Veterans Health Administration (VHA) facility, nursing home, extended care facility, or domiciliary (including state-operated Veterans' homes), or
* Veteran is an employee of the contract examination vendor scheduled to conduct the examination.

**Note 1:** An IDES SM is included in bullet 3.

**Note 2:** For IDES SMs that fall under bullet 3, MSCs are reminded to review [M21-1 III.i.2.D.6.n](https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000033257/M21-1-Part-III-Subpart-i-Chapter-2-Section-D-Overview-of-the-Integrated-Disability-Evaluation-System-IDES-and-Initial-Claims-Development?query=ides#6n)**. (Handling Cases Involving a Participant Who is Too Disabled to Travel to an Examination) before ordering exams.**

Note 3: MSCs should update VTA per the definitions for the SHA and Other Exam fields.

Ex: Laparoscopy is an exam request. QTC exams will be in the SHA Exam section and VHA will be in the Other Exam section.

Current IDES Program Timeliness

As outreach specialists and VA’s frontline contact with SMs and Veterans, it is vital that we are realistic in our communications regarding claims processing times. Below is the current program timeliness data (ADC) for December 2020.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Stage/Phase** | **IDES Goal (AD/NAD)** | **December 2020 (AD/NAD)** |
| **Claim Dev**  | **5/11** | **9/14** |
| **Medical Stage** | **32** | **137/144** |
| **Proposed Ratings** | **20** | **3/9** |
| **Recon Ratings**  | **4** | **10/9** |
| **Exit Interviews** | **14** | **8/9** |
| **Final Ratings** | **20/na** | **12/na** |

 ***Source:*** *VTA Completed Reports (Days to Complete Including Deferment) January 4, 2021 (8am ET).*

 ***Note:*** *VA using the goals from the 230-day process.*

**VTA Specific Topics**

**VTA version .10**

VTA v.10 is scheduled for release on January 20 (9pm ET). There are no updates/changes to the MSC or DRAS Tabs. A complete list of the updates/changes can be found in [Folder 6 of the VTA Knowledge Center](https://vta.va.gov/VTA/secured/DES/View/HomepagePKCFileManager.aspx?FolderId=207).

**Case Transfers**

When an IDES SMs case is transferred from the initiating MTF to another MTF assigned to a different Regional Office, the losing MSC Coach should contact the gaining MSC Coach (MSC Coaches can be found [here](https://vaww.infoshare.va.gov/sites/212Procedures/212D_MSC_Info/Lists/MSC%20IDES%20list/AllItems.aspx)) and cc the IDES Mailbox with the following information:

* Case ID
* Details regarding transfer

When details and agreement have been completed, the gaining MSC will contact the IDES Mailbox to request the case be assigned to them in VTA.

BDD Specific Topics

**BDD and BDD-Excluded Claims on VA.gov**

All active duty SMs can now submit their BDD or BDD-Excluded claim on [VA.gov](https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/). SMs and Veterans can still submit their claim in [eBenefits](https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/homepage) until 9:00 p.m. EST on January 20, 2021. Only those SMs and Veterans who started a claim in [eBenefits](https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/homepage) before 9:00 p.m. EST on January 20, 2021, which has not been submitted or expired online, will have one year from the date they started their application to finish and submit that claim on [eBenefits](https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/homepage). All others, including those SMs and Veterans with pending claims who want to submit additional claims electronically, will receive a message on [eBenefits](https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/homepage) to go to [VA.gov](https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/).

Current BDD Program Timeliness

As VA’s frontline contact with SMs and Veterans, it is vital that we are transparent in our communications regarding claims processing times. Below is the current program timeliness data as of January 8, 2021.

|  |
| --- |
| **BDD Timeliness Data** |
| **Data Points** | **Goal** | **January 8, 2021** |
| **Completed FYTD** |  | **5,376** |
| **Receipts FYTD** |  | **5,577** |
| **Pending** |  | **10,927** |
| **# Completed w/in 30 Days of Discharge** |  | **1,457** |
| **% Completed w/in 30 Days of Discharge** | **100%** | **27.1%** |
| **Avg. Days to Complete FYTD** | **30** | **87.5** |

***Source:*** *Tableau BDD History Report, January 9, 2021*

Upcoming Teleconferences

The next BDD/IDES Call is scheduled for Tuesday, February 9, 2021, at 2PM ET. Please submit IDES questions and proposed topics for discussion to the IDES Mailbox, and BDD questions and proposed topics for discussion to the BDD Mailbox no later than close of business (COB), Monday, January 25, 2021.

The next BDD/IDES Coaches Call is scheduled for March 4, 2021, at 2PM ET. Please submit IDES questions and proposed topics for discussion to the IDES Mailbox, and BDD questions and proposed topics for discussion to the BDD Mailbox no later than COB, Monday February 15, 2021.

Open Floor