

CLAIMS FOLDERS MAINTENANCE LESSON PLAN

PREREQUISITE TRAINING

None

PURPOSE OF LESSON

The purpose of this lesson is to provide the VSR an introduction to the various types of folders located within a Regional Office and the maintenance of the folders.

PPT #2

Provided with the appropriate manual and regulatory references and handouts, the trainee will be able to:

- Identify 2 types of claims folders
- Input the receipt of active mail into MAP-D and dictate a MAP-D note
- Locate the current reference for the handling and destruction of all personally identifiable and sensitive information
- Identify folder value of documents
- Determine where and how to file documents
- Determine the appropriate procedure for handling original documents
- Describe general policies for folder storage

Given a claims folder and sample claim documents, the trainee will be able to assess a document's folder value and properly file the documents in the claims folder.

TIME REQUIRED

1 hour 10 minutes lecture; 20 minutes review exercise

INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD

Lecture, participatory discussion and practical exercise

MATERIALS/ TRAINING AIDS

- *Claims Folder Maintenance Trainee Handouts*
- *Claims Folder PowerPoint presentation*

INSTRUCTOR PREPARATION

Trainee handouts, as well as copies of the PowerPoint, are provided in the student guides assembled at the beginning of Challenge.

Suggestions:

Create copies for class of sample SHARE/BIRLS screens showing Folder Location and establishment.

Have samples of DOC cards, GWOT flashes, routing slips, etc. to

show the trainees as you discuss folder maintenance. Bring copies of actual claims folders for trainees to organize and file record materials and identify the types of records that are part of the folder.

Games (time permitting)

Speed filer: Break students into small teams (4-6 people). Have enough supplies to have one empty C-file and pertinent claim documents (i.e. 526, 4142, Rating Decision, payment records, etc) for each team. Each team must correctly assemble the loose claim documents into the C-file while being timed. The timing may either be by stopwatch for each team to go individually or it may be a race. Scoring will be 1 point for each correctly filed document then additional points for order of time (shortest time equals five additional points, second place gets four additional points, etc).

INTRODUCTION

Introduce yourself and inform trainees of the lesson topic.

The purpose of this lesson is to provide the VSR with an introduction to claims folders, mail management, and proper claims folder maintenance.

MOTIVATION

Explain to the trainee that the claims folder is the only hard copy record the VA keeps on a claimant. In cases where the claims folder was not properly maintained, important documentation of the veteran's claim has been misplaced and/or misfiled which has detrimental effects on the processing of the claim.

REFERENCES

- M21-1MR, Part III, Subpart ii, Chapter 3 – Folder Establishment
- M21-1MR, Part III, Subpart ii, Chapter 4 – Files and Folder Control
- M23-1, Part I, Chapters 2 and 13* - Administrative Operations

*Note: The information in this reference may be somewhat dated, but it will give you additional background for this lesson. You can access M23-1 by going through WARMS, Direct Links. Click on ADMIN 23.

TYPES OF FOLDERS

TOPIC OBJECTIVES At the end of this topic, trainee will be able to recognize different types of folders.

TIME REQUIRED 10 minutes

REFERENCES ■ M21-1MR, Part III, Subpart ii, Chapter 3, Section B, Topic 3

TEACHING POINTS Discuss the different types of folders and the significance of each.

Types of Folders

Refer trainees to the Types of Folders Job Aid Handout p. 3

PPT #3

Refer trainees to M21-1MR, III.ii.3.B.3 to discuss the two different types of folders used for the various claims filed. *Allow trainees to enter manual reference prior to discussing the different folders.*

- Claim Folder (C-files) – a red-rope, three-flap folder, with fasteners on the inside is used for an initial claim for benefits from a veteran.
- Notice of Death (NOD) Folder – a lightweight, two-flap folder with fasteners on the inside is used for a first notice of death (FNOD).

It is good to have both a Cfile and NOD Folder to show the class.

Discuss with them the different identifiers (i.e. tape color for digit) that are on a Cfile. Have them find the Manual Reference that outlines these identifiers (M21-1MR, III.ii.3.B.4.a).

Check Comprehension

- Ask the trainees what folder they will primarily be using as a VSR.
- Ask them when a NOD folder is established.
- Ask them the color codes for various terminal digits.

MAIL MANAGEMENT

TOPIC OBJECTIVES Given a computer with access to all VBA references and applications, the trainee shall be able to:

- Input the receipt of active mail into MAP-D and dictate a MAP-D note
- Locate the current reference for the handling and destruction of all personally identifiable and sensitive information

TIME REQUIRED 30 minutes

- REFERENCES**
- M21-1MR, III.ii.4.B – Handling Mail
 - Current guidance as set forth by VBA Letter 20-08-63
 - MAP-D User Guide

TEACHING POINTS Please stress that mail management is primarily conducted by the Triage team in a service center and/or by each team's PSC or CA. However, it is good to know the process of mail handling and the VSR's role in it. The most important point to stress is the proper handling of veterans' records to ensure privacy and integrity of their claims and/or appeals.

PPT # 4

Definitions **Active claim:** Any request for veterans' benefits that is currently under end product control and being adjudicated.

Active mail: Any piece of information, whether a claimant's statement or doctor's records, that pertains to an active claim or attempts to initiate a claim for veterans' benefits.

Personally Identifiable Information (PII): Any unique identifying number, characteristic, code, or other data that is used to identify an individual or can be traced back to an individual.

Mail Management

Per the standing manual reference, all active mail must be attached to the veteran's C-file and then delivered immediately to the correct team. The majority of active mail will be attached by PSCs (clerks) or CAs (Claims assistants) in the individual teams. Occasionally, you may receive mail for folders that are covered to your location. Whenever you receive mail, you will need to log the evidence in MAP-D. If it was solicited evidence, then it will be input on the Tracked Items screen; if unsolicited, then it will be input on the Evidence screen. After any action you make with a claim, VSRs should input a Development note into MAP-D to concisely detail his or her actions on the claim (ensure the note is associated to the proper claim/EP). MAP-D notes are important for our National Call Centers (NCCs). It makes it easier for the NCC staff to assist the veteran by providing accurate and timely information without having to navigate through several screens to determine the progress of the veteran's claim. Also, failure to properly update MAP-D constitutes as a quality error (see Enclosure 4 of VBA Letter 20-08-63).

This is a good time to have trainees go into MAP-D and see the different screens where mail is tracked. You will need to Cest and generate a letter (just one) prior to class for students to navigate through MAPD.

Have trainees find MAP-D User Guide and VBA Letter 20-08-63.

PPT # 5

Instructors, please be aware that this section may be subject to change at any moment. Please adjust as necessary.

Under the new guidance of VBA Letter 20-08-63, the control of PII documents and personal items has been modified. Currently, all employees may have one locked personal drawer. Just emphasize, **only personal information in your personal locked drawer**. No mail, claim paperwork, or C-files should be in your drawers. If you have training material, it must be clearly marked as training material and all PII blacked out. This VBA letter also sets forth new guidance on the destruction of PII and other sensitive information – this should have been addressed at their home station prior to Challenge.

Check Comprehension

Ensure trainees understand the importance of MAP-D compliance and understand how to find references pertaining to mail management.

CLAIMS FOLDER STRUCTURE & MAINTENANCE

TOPIC OBJECTIVES

At the end of this topic, the trainee will be able to:

- Identify folder value of documents
- Determine where and how to file documents
- Determine the appropriate procedure for handling original documents
- Describe general policies for folder storage

TIME REQUIRED

30 minutes

REFERENCES

- M21-1MR, Part III, Subpart ii, Chapter 3, Section C – Filing and Removal of Material
- M21-1MR, Part III, Subpart ii, Chapter 4, Section A – Folder Storage
- M21-1MR, Part III, Subpart ii, Chapter 4, Section G – Folder Maintenance

TEACHING POINTS

Discuss the folder value of documents, the appropriate handling of original records and duplicate material, and, the proper filing of essential documents in the claims folder. Also discuss maintenance of claims folders, the VSR's responsibility in maintaining claims folders, and the proper handling and storage of folders.

Folder Value of Documents

PPT # 6

Refer trainees to the Non-Record Value Material Handout p. 4

VSRs must be able to determine folder value of documents. Tell the VSR only essential material pertinent to the veteran's pending and historical claims should be filed in the claims folder. Non-record value material has served its purpose and should not be maintained in the folder beyond its use. Some examples of non-record value materials are routing slips, screen prints, and envelopes (without date stamps or forwarding addresses). Refer trainees to M21-1MR, III.ii.3.C.9 for removing material from files.

PPT # 7 **Duplicate material from other sources** can be discarded and the file annotated. **Duplicate copies of evidence sent in by the claimant** should be date-stamped and returned to him/her with a cover letter explaining why we are returning the evidence.

PPT # 8 Review M21-1MR, Part III.ii.3.C.7 to establish what VA considers to be an original record and the proper handling of original records. Also, discuss the types of documents that can be duplicated and what documents we are prohibited in reproducing.

PPT # 9 Refer trainees to the *Claims Folder Structure Handout (p. 5)*. Discuss each file flap and its contents.

Refer trainees to M21-1MR, Part III, Subpart ii, 3.C.8

Emphasize preserving the chronological order of documents in files.

Note: For filing in segregated folders, see M21-1MR, Part III, Subpart ii, 4. (If necessary, explain what a segregated folder is.)

Responsibility

All VSRs are responsible for claims folder maintenance.

PPT # 10

Special Note: Remind trainees of the importance of preserving the integrity of the claims file for the 150 day period following a BVA decision that is subject to appeal to the Court of Appeals for Veteran's Claims (CAVC).

Claims Folder Maintenance and Management

Proper folder maintenance is essential in providing maximum protection of veteran's records. (M21-1MR.III.ii.4.G) As part of the VSR's responsibility, they must repair folders and STR envelopes that have become damaged (this includes complete renovation of the Cfile) and avoid overcrowding file cabinets to prevent further unnecessary damage to the file. Please emphasize that any necessary maintenance must occur before a Cfile is transferred out; this is mainly a Triage/PSC/CA duty.

Please discuss the policies of folder storage found in M21-1MR, III.ii.4.A. Focus on:

- o Filing of folders → folders are to be filed in the designated areas, should **not** be filed in desks, on the floor, or any other undesignated area, and veteran's records should not be remove from VA premises for any reason without management approval.

- o Locked files → are files that are maintained in a locked room/cabinet with access controlled by a custodian. The manual mandates that this room/cabinet must be in, or in close proximity to, the VSCM, who is the custodian of these records.
- o COVERS → must be used to track veterans' folders. Instructors, please be aware that all trainees should have received a separate class on COVERS so this is merely just a reiteration to 'connect the dots' of the VSR's job. Just stress the importance of proper utilization of COVERS and how it relates to efficient claims processing and protecting the integrity of veterans' records.

Check Comprehension Either open Q&A addressing topic objectives and teaching points or game – will most likely depend on time constraints.

Field question from the trainees or ask direct questions if the trainees are not forthcoming.

REVIEW EXERCISE

EXERCISE

Trainee Handouts p. 6

Allow 20 minutes to complete the review exercises – 10 minutes for students to answer and 10 minutes to review as a class.

For the *Claims Folder Maintenance Exercise*, ask the trainees to work as partners or teams to come up with the right answers. Go over the correct answers as a group.