Procedural Advisory: The Long Term Solution 12/1 Retroactive Work Product (WP) and Updated Letter Functionality

November 26, 2019

What Changed: As of December 1, 2019, Education Service has updated the Long Term Solution (LTS) to process Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA) payments using either the capped Department of Defense (DoD) Rate or the uncapped VA MHA Rate based on the date the claimant first began using his or her Post-9/11 GI Bill (CH33) entitlement. Additionally, the LTS has been programmed to select the MHA rate of the campus where a student is enrolled in a majority of classes when he/she is concurrently enrolled at multiple locations.

Although the requirements were set to take place on August 1, 2018, VA delayed implementation of these changes until **December 1, 2019**. These changes are per Sections 501 and 107 of the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017. All claimants will now fall into one of three categories listed below:

- Individuals who first used their Post-9/11 GI Bill **prior to January 1, 2018**, will continue to receive the "**uncapped**" rates from the "**VA Rate Table**". (this is the current process)
- Individuals who first used their benefits between January 1, 2018, and July 31, 2018, referred to as the "special population". These individuals will receive the 2017 academic year (AY) uncapped rate until the DoD rate surpasses the uncapped rate or the claimant breaks the rate protection rules.
- Individuals who first used their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits on or after August 1, 2018. These individuals will receive the "capped" rates from the "DoD Rate Table".

RPO Impact: While it is estimated the majority of impacted claims will be processed through automation**,** Veterans Claims Examiners (VCEs) must process the 12/1 Retro Work Product (WP) for all impacted claims between December 1, 2019 and December 9, 2019.

RPO Benefit: Enhanced claims processing functionality to include new MHA logic and automated print capability.

What RPO Action is Needed: Starting **December 1, 2019,** the LTS will run a batch process to identify impacted claimants and update the eligible MHA. Claims which do not fully automate will be compiled on the VCE Action Report for each respective Regional Processing Office (RPO). RPO leadership will distribute the daily VCE Action Reports and prioritize work until the process is complete.

VCE Action Required:

STEP 1. Using the VCE Action Report, search for the claimant in LTS using the Social Security Number (SSN) provided. Navigate to the claimant's Bio screen.

Review The Image Management System (TIMS) for any reported address changes since the claim was last processed and ensure biographical information in the LTS and the Benefits Delivery Network (BDN) are accurate before authorizing the WP.

STEP 2. Navigate to the WP History page for the selected claim.

STEP 3. On the WP History page, review whether a 12/1 Retro WP is already in progress. If a WP is not in progress, proceed to Step 4. If the 12/1 WP has already been added ("In Progress"), click on the "Continue" hyperlink and proceed to Step 5.

STEP 4. For claims requiring a 12/1 Retro WP, you will see a new gold button to "Add 12/1 Retro WP". The appearance of this button indicates that this claim was not automated as part of the 12/1 Retro Batch Process.

Click this button to generate the 12/1 Retro WP.

STEP 5. A new gold banner will appear at the top of the WP Summary Page notifying VCEs this WP must only be used to authorize retroactive Colmery claims.

Review the details on the WP Summary page and select the "Refresh Master Record" button to preview any changes to Recurring Payments. The Recurring Payments section will display any payment changes that will occur as a result of authorizing the 12/1 Retro WP.

For any claim requiring manual generation of a 12/1 Retro WP, the "Stop Automation" flag will be set. If the flag is not set, skip Step 6 and continue to Step 7.

STEP 6. Navigate to the Claimant Bio screen and scroll down to the Automation section. Review the Stop Automation flag and read the Notes section in its entirety. A note was added to all 12/1 retroactive claims that were not fully automated. This note should be deleted, and Stop Automation flag unchecked, once the 12/1 retro WP has been authorized.

If the Notes section includes a message other than the specific instruction to uncheck the Stop Automation box after a 12/1 Retro WP is created, **DO NOT** uncheck the box.

STEP 7. Once the VCE has reviewed the details of the WP and unchecked the Stop Automation box (if applicable), select Authorize with Automatic Payments to authorize the WP.

EXCEPTION: As always, Fry Spouse payments must be manually processed - follow local guidance.

NOTE: Only positive housing payments resulting from 12/1 Retro WP processing shall be sent to the claimant. **ABSOLUTELY NO DEBTS** will be established, nor any other resulting payments released during the 12/1 Retro conversion process.

STEP 8. If a payment or debt is generated as a result of authorizing this 12/1 Retro WP, the Payment Instructions screen will display. If no payments or debts are generated, the LTS will return to the WP History Page.

STEP 9. Letters will appear at the bottom of the WP Summary page **AFTER** the 12/1 Retro WP is authorized. These letters have been automatically sent to the print queue for processing and require no additional action from a VCE. As with fully automated claims, these PDF letters may be reviewed and reprinted if necessary.

The three possible scenarios and letters generated are listed below:

- **Claimant was overpaid MHA:** 501 Debt Letter and the Colmery-Specific Committee on Waivers and Compromises (COWC) Letter.
- **Claimant was underpaid MHA:** 501 Payment Letter
- **No change to claimant's MHA:** No Change Letter

STEP 10. Navigate to the WP History page, locate the description field language "2019 One Time Retroactive". Verify the WP associated with this action has been authorized and normal processing may resume. An active "Add Work Product" button will be displayed for normal processing to continue.

New and Improved Letter Review and Enhanced Functionality:

Due to enhancements made to LTS in support of the 12/1 Colmery WP, all LTS letters, for both automated and non-automated claim types, will be unsuppressed by default beginning December 2019. All letters must be carefully reviewed and appropriately edited whenever inaccurate or incomplete. No additional action is required by a VCE for letters which do not require editing. Comments in the LTS will not be needed on supplemental claims where the letter(s) is not suppressed, unless the specific claim information must be communicated for the WP.

If one letter must be edited, all letters in the WP will require manual handling. A VCE must ensure the "Suppress Letter(s)" checkbox is checked in order to convert the letter into a Microsoft Word document for editing. Edited letters will need to be captured into TIMS, manually printed, and mailed. The authorizer must ensure the WP Summary Comments section is properly annotated prior to authorization whenever a "suppressed" LTS system generated letter will not be sent.

A VCE must suppress, edit, print and mail the following letters:

- Award 1 (COE) for a non-approved school or program because the requirement of a cover letter for the State Approving Agency (SAA) must be manually generated.

- MITC-1 because it requires manually enclosing VA Form 21-4138 (Statement in Support of Claim).

- MITC-4 (6 Credit Exclusion) letter, if generated with the SR-1 (Adverse Action) letter may appear inaccurate. If both letters are accurate, these may be released without manual generation.

Additional Questions: If you have any additional questions, please direct them to the Procedures Team at POLPROC.VBACO@va.gov

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Procedures Team

Education Service