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# Automated Decision Support (ADS) Claims

**Target Audience:** Decision Review Operations Center (DROC) Management and Quality Review Teams (QRT), Decision Review Officers (DRO), Rating Veterans Service Representatives (RVSR), Veterans Service Representatives (VSR), and Claims Assistants (CA)

**Presenter:** Paula Tusia, Program Analyst, Office of Production Optimization (OPO)

**Background**

ADS leverages available technology to automate specific areas of development within the claim cycle. The Office of Business Integration has worked with the Office of Information Technology (OIT) to analyze the claim process and determine which parts of processing a claim requires human intervention. They have used technology, data, and even employee feedback to automate specific administrative tasks to reduce the burden on claim processors. ADS is not end-to-end automation. It does not replace the need for employee validation. The goal of Automated Decision Support will result in Faster more accurate and consistent decisions, creating a better user experience for processors, and enhancing the customer experience for Veterans and their beneficiaries.

**Ready for Decision and Automated Exam Functionality**

There are two main parts of automation. Once a claim has been established, the automation logic determines if a claim is ready for decision or if an examination needs to be ordered. If there is sufficient medical evidence within the Veteran’s eFolder to decide, the evidence will be compiled and indexed into the Automated Review Summary Document (ARSD). If there is not enough evidence of record to decide the claim, an automated examination request will be submitted through the Veterans Benefit Management System (VBMS) Exam Management System.

The ARSD is a decision support tool that identifies documents in the Veterans eFolder to assist claims processors in their review. For automation eligible contentions, medical evidence is compiled into this document. If you are working on a presumptive condition, the summary document identifies possible military service locations related to that contention and possible evaluation criteria. When a claim is established with an automation eligible contention, the ARSD is generated and uploaded into the Veteran’s eFolder.

**User Role Responsibility**

Automated Decision Support assists claims processors in making faster, more accurate and consistent decisions for Veterans. ADS plays a role for each VBA employee processing claims.

* ***Veterans Service Representative (VSR):*** VSRs may see draft examinations in VBMS and VSRs are required to take the appropriate steps in ordering an exam. VSRs are responsible for confirming if an ADS claim is RFD if additional development actions are required
* ***Rating Veterans Service Representative (RVSR)****:* RVSRs are responsible for reviewing relevant evidence and making a decision on the Veterans claim. RVSRs can utilize the ARSD as a decision support tool to assist with quickly identifying evidence and locating key terms to help with their final decision.
* ***Quality Review Specialist (QRS):*** The QRS will begin seeing Individual Quality Reviews for claims impacted by automation. They should continue following current review policies and procedures for these claims.There is a separate quality team that deals with automation actions that will have no impact to an individual user.

**Training Information**

OPO with the support of OBI, is currently training each district using the train the trainer approach. Each District receives three training sessions. For RVSRs they will receive All Automation Eligible Contention Training and Multi-Issue Contention training, and VSRs will receive Examination training on ADS claims. Training for the Northeast and Southeast District stations began in October and will continue with Continental and Pacific Districts through mid-December. There is no official date when this functionality will go live at the stations, but we are making sure we train all stations in preparation.

Training focuses on Automation Decision Support, the Automated Review Summary Document, Claim Processing Procedures, Quality Assurance, and Helpful Tips and Tricks and Resources. OBI also provides a live demonstration within these trainings to show the ARSD in the eFolder and discuss the technology that occurs behind the scenes.

# Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) Quality Review Team Individual Quality Review (QRTIQR) Error Trends

**Target Audience:** DROC Management and QRT

**Presenter:** Alexandria Katinos, Senior Management and Program Analyst, OAR Program Administration (PA)

**References:**

* M21-5, 3.A.12.c, *DRO Review Elements*
* M21-5, 3.A.4.b, *Misclassified Errors*
* M21-5, 3.A.4.h, *Definition: Cascading*
* M21-5, 3.A.4.i, *Avoiding the Cascade Effect*

OAR reviewed the FY22 QRTIQR errors. As a reminder QRTIQRs, are claimed based. For FY22 there were 14 QRTIQR errors with 17 tasks in error. No specific error trends were identified.

**Authorization Quality Review Specialist (AQRS) QRTIQR Findings**

For AQRS QRTIQRs there were a total of 12 errors cited:

* 2 errors cited on CA reviews
* 7 errors cited on VSR Post reviews
* 3 errors cited on VSR Pre reviews

The chart below provides a more comprehensive breakdown of the specific questions pertaining to the errors cited.



**Rating Quality Review Specialists (RQRS) QRTIQR Findings**

For RQRS reviews, there were a total of 5 errors cited:

* 2 errors cited on DRO reviews
* 3 errors cited on RVSR reviews

The chart below provides a more comprehensive breakdown of the specific questions pertaining to the errors cited.



**Additional QRTIQR Findings**

Overall, there were 10 errors cited for error missed by QRS, 3 errors cited for incorrect error cited by QRS, and 1 error cited for Yes vs NA issues.

In one case, a QRTIQR Error was cited under Task 12. During the QRTIQR, the QRS completing the review added to the error comment. The QRS disagreed with review to add to the comment and erroneously cited an error on the QRS under review. Per the M21-5, Task 12 does not constitute a QRT Performance error since only Tasks 1-11 are factored into the quality calculation for DROs/RVSRs.

On another review, a QRS cited an error but did not include references to support the error. During the QRTIQR, the QRS completing the review identified the missing references and added them to the review. The QRT Coach, however, erroneously overturned the error on the basis of the original QRS not including references. In this case the error should have remained. Per the M21-5, errors will not be removed on reconsideration merely because the error was misclassified on the appropriate checklist or due to insufficient supporting reference.

In the next QRTIQR reviewed, an error was cited on the QRS for an error they called and the QRS submitted a reconsideration for error. The QRT Coach agreed with QRS’ reconsideration request; however, the QRT Coach erroneously changed the error to a comment. The error here was still an error and should have remained that way.

The last QRTIQR error reviewed, the error cited by the reviewing QRS was overturned because of cascading. In this case the second reviewer found a missed dependency error and then also called a notification error for the same dependency error. Once the QRS has determined the root cause of an error, the QRS should cite no other errors as a natural result of the initial root cause error.

# FY22 OAR National Error Trends

**Target Audience:** DROC Management, QRT, DROs, RVSRs, VSRs, and CAs

**Presenter:** Chelsey Kondrak, Senior Management and Program Analyst, OAR PA

**FY 22 National Quality Reviews**

OAR’s Program Administration Staff conducts national quality reviews of claims processed at the Seattle, St. Petersburg, and Washington DC Decision Review Operations Centers (DROC).

OAR conducted national quality reviews for FY22 (October 2021 through September 2022) on random samples of 551 cases composed of compensation and 199 cases composed of pension rating and authorization workload.

OAR reviewed:

* 432 compensation rating quality reviews
* 119 compensation authorization quality reviews
* 88 pension rating quality reviews
* 111 pension authorization quality reviews

**FY22 Compensation Rating National Quality Reviews**

A total of 85 unique claims contained 58 benefit entitlement (BE) errors for an 86.6% FY22 accuracy rate (unweighted). The issue-based accuracy is 93.3% (unweighted).

OAR identified BE error trends to include the following:

* 38 BE errors cited under Question 4 for not returning insufficient medical opinions and/or exams, failing to follow remand instructions, and failing to schedule required examinations. For example, the DROC issued a SSOC prior to returning an insufficient medical opinion. The medical opinion did not explain why there was no aggravation and did not comply with the Board’s directives.
* 9 BE errors cited under Question 6 related to incorrect percentage evaluations, to include under evaluating disabilities. For example, rating decisions did not include favorable findings. Also, a rating decision did not provide a summary of the evidence supporting the effective date for the grant of service connection.
* 8 BE errors cited under Question 7 for assigning incorrect effective dates affecting payment.
* 5 BE errors cited under Question 1 for failing to address and decide all claimed issues. For example, a Rating Decision failed to address the issue of service connection for the Veteran’s cause of death.
* 4 BE errors cited under Question 5 for failing to correctly grant or deny all issues.
* 3 BE errors cited under Question 2 for failing to address all inferred and/or ancillary issues.

In addition to the FY22 BE compensation rating error trends, OAR also identified the following compensation rating error trends for FY22:

* 13 non-critical errors cited under Question 9 related to improper decision documentation. The errors related to decision makers failing to address the bases of the decisions.
* 13 non-critical errors cited under Question 16 related to incorrect rating comments for the end product (EP) under review. For example, the evidence section of the Supplemental Statement of the Case (SSOC) did not include documentation of all relevant evidence.

**FY22 Compensation Rating National Quality Reviews Summary**

The top BE error trend for FY22 at the DC and St. Petersburg DROCs is Question 4, VCAA compliant development to obtain all indicated evidence.

* DROC DC accounted for 85% of the errors, and St. Petersburg DROC accounted for 15% of the errors in FY22.
* Most of the errors relate to insufficient medical opinions/exams and failure to comply with Board remand directives.

OAR identified Question 9, proper rating decision documentation, and Question 16, correct rating comments, as the top non-critical rating errors in FY 2022.

* The errors cited under Question 9 relate to decision makers failing to address the bases of the decisions and failing to provide summaries of the considered evidence.
* The errors cited under Question 16 varied, and there is no clear trend in the reasons for citing errors under this question.

**FY22 Compensation Authorization National Quality Reviews**

A total of 12 unique claims contained 12 errors, 3 of which contained 3 BE errors. The unweighted compensation authorization BE accuracy for FY22 is 97.5%.

OAR did not identify any specific BE error trends but identified the following non-critical error trend: four non-critical errors under Task 12 for incorrect completion of actions not associated with the EP under review.

Although OAR cited 2 errors under Tasks 1, 7, and 10 for FY 2022, OAR did not identify any non-critical error trends under these tasks as the errors were not reoccurring for a specific DROC throughout FY22.

**FY22 Compensation Authorization National Quality Reviews**

OAR did not identify any significant BE error trends during the review period.

OAR identified Task 12, correct completion of actions not associated with the EP under review, as the top non-critical compensation authorization error for FY22.

* Seattle DROC accounted for 50% and DROC DC accounted for the remaining 50% of non-critical errors/comments cited under Task 12 for FY22.
* OAR cited non-critical errors/comments under Task 12 for the following: failure to establish the EP 040, application of an erroneous end date for Chapter 35 Dependents Educational Assistance (DEA), failure to send the request for waiver to the Debt Management Center (DMC), and failure to obtain the correct address following receipt of notification of undeliverable mail.

**FY22 Pension Rating National Quality Reviews**

A total 15 unique claims contained errors, 5 of which contained BE errors. The pension rating BE accuracy (unweighted) for the review period is 94.3%, and the issue-based accuracy is 96.4%

While OAR cited two BE errors during FY22 under Question 1 for failure to address and decide all claimed issues, OAR did not identify any significant pension rating BE error trends for FY22.

**FY22 Pension Rating National Quality Reviews Summary**

OAR did not identify any significant BE error trends during the review period.

OAR identified Question 10, correct notification, as the top non-critical pension rating error for FY22. OAR cited non-critical errors under Question 10 for the following:

* Notification letter failed to explain how to obtain or access evidence in making the decision
* Failure to send notification letter to the claimant
* Failure to provide favorable findings
* Failure to comply with Board remand directives

**FY22 Pension Authorization National Quality Reviews**

A total of 15 claims contained errors, 1 of which contained a BE error. The pension authorization BE accuracy (unweighted) for the review period is 99.1%.

For FY22, OAR cited only one BE error under Task 2 for failure to address all issues.

OAR identified non-critical error trends for FY22 to include the following:

* Four non-critical errors under Task 3 for improper development or procedural issues
* Four non-critical errors under Task 14 for incorrect actions unrelated to the EP or EP notification

**FY22 Pension Authorization National Quality Reviews Summary**

OAR did not identify any significant BE error trends during the review period.

OAR identified Task 3, proper development or procedural issues, and Task 14, correct actions unrelated to the EP or EP notification, as the top non-critical pension authorization errors for FY22.

OAR cited 4 non-critical errors under Task 3 for the following:

* Lack of evidence of HLR decision in the file
* Incorrect application of difference of opinion versus identification of a duty to assist error
* Failure to establish EP 040 for correction of the duty to assist error
* Failure to upload relevant records to the Veteran’s eFolder

# Agent and Attorney Fee Coordinator (AAFC) Monthly Call

**Target Audience:** DROC Management, QRT, and AAFCs

**Presenter:** Suzanne Ribish, Management and Program Analyst, OAR PA

OAR will begin hosting a monthly AAFC call which will take place the third Tuesday of each month, starting in November 2022.

Goals of the call:

* Review policies and procedures
* Reinforce training
* Provide opportunity for field to provide feedback
* Answer questions from the field

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