Frequently Asked Questions

VA Video Connect – Virtual Informal Conference

VBA Personnel

Q1: **What is VA Video Connect (VAVC)?**

A1: It is an application (app) that allows claimants and/or representatives to meet with VA personnel virtually or through video in a secure and private connection using a smartphone, computer, or tablet.

Q2: **Does VAVC prevent holding an informal conference (IC) at first contact or first call with the claimant or representative?**

A2: No. Once the date and time of the IC is coordinated with the claimant and/or representative, an immediate appointment can be scheduled in VAVC.

Q3: **If the claimant expresses a desire to have IC at first call, should you still schedule using VAVC?**

A3: Yes. Scheduled ICs and the IC status updates in the application. Since IC appointments can be tracked in VAVC, please use the application to schedule and hold the IC.

Q4: **In the scenario above in Q2/A2, should the IC be held on the phone or through VAVC?**

A4: VAVC. If you are coordinating the IC with the claimant or their representative and they are available on the first call, please add the meeting date and time in the scheduler, hang up from the phone call, click the link in the email notification, then hold the IC using VAVC.

This allows you to properly manage and track the ICs scheduled in the VAVC application.

However, if there is a technical issue with VAVC, then use alternative means to conduct the IC and ensure the IC is documented.

Q5: **Who can use VAVC?**

A5: To use VAVC, there must be:

- o A pending higher-level review (HLR) with an IC selected with Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA).
- o The claimant and/or representative must have an email account where the link to the virtual informal conference room can be sent and accessed to start the video appointment.
- o All users must use internet service at home or on a device (if using mobile phone or tablet).

Q6: What type of equipment is needed to use VAVC?

A6: VAVC is compatible with most Windows compatible devices such as personal computers (PC), laptops, Android mobile devices, and iOS mobile devices.

Q7: Should you download the app for VAVC?

A7: No. VA employees do not need to download the VAVC app. Click the conference link in the email notification and the meeting window will open.

For best performance, it is recommended to use Google Chrome as the internet browser.

Q8: Does VAVC require a high-speed internet connection?

A8: No. VAVC will work over lower-bandwidth connections, including cellular data connections, although the quality of the video may be reduced. If cellular data is used, a 3G or 4G connection with at least 2 connection bars is recommended.

Q9: Is the video connection with VAVC secure?

A9: Yes. Only invited attendees can join a virtual IC room in VAVC. Attendees can always see who has joined the room.

VA conference hosts can lock the room once all invited attendees have joined, so no other parties may join the conference session.

Q10: Will the claimant's family member or caregiver be able to join the IC in VAVC?

A10: Yes. VAVC virtual informal conference rooms allow for multiple attendees.

If additional attendees are in separate locations, claimants or representatives can share the email notification that provides the conference link.

Q11: Is a username or password needed to access VAVC?

A11: No. To enter access the virtual IC room, click on the link provided in the notification email. No username or password is needed.

When joining the virtual IC room, the application will ask for the name you want shown during the VAVC session.

Q12: How can the VAVC session be accessed?

A12: When a VAVC session is scheduled, you will receive an email with a link to join the virtual IC room.

- o   The email also includes additional resources to help you learn about and use VAVC.
- o   At the time of your appointment, click on the link, enter your name, and launch the session.
- o   Once you launch the session, select **Audio**, claimants waiting in the virtual waiting room will be added to the conference.

Q13: Can the same link for all the VAVC sessions be used?

A13: No. The same link cannot be used for all VAVC sessions. A new email invitation will be sent for each session. The link in that email should be used.

The link is active 30 minutes prior to and after the scheduled IC.

Q14: What if the claimant needs to change the VAVC appointment?

A14: The claimant or their representative can call the VA National Call Center (NCC) at 1-800-827-1000 to leave information regarding the appointment. NCC will add the VA Form 27-0820, *Report of General Information* in the Veteran's claim file.

Q15: Will I receive a reminder before my VAVC appointment?

A15: Yes. A reminder email will be sent to the conference host and attendees 24 hours prior to the appointment.

Appointment confirmations with instructions and links are sent when the appointment is scheduled.

It is recommended to add the appointment and session information to your Outlook calendar.

Additionally, you can set up an Outlook email folder to save all VAVC invitations so that they are easy to find for each appointment.

Q16: What if the email notification is lost?

A16: If you are unable to locate the email notification of the scheduled appointment and session information, be sure to:

- o   Check your spam folder for the email notification.

- To search your email, type video_visit@va.gov in the search field.
- To have the email resent, go into the scheduler application, conduct a search for your appointment, and locate the conference link in the "Application Manager".
- After locating the scheduled appointment, click the "Send" button and the email notification with appointment and session link will be resent to you and the invited attendees.

Q17: What if the appointment link doesn't work?

A17: Check the email notification for the date and time of the IC. You may not be able to access the virtual room 30 minutes before or after your scheduled appointment time.

Do not use the link for past VAVC past sessions.

For technical assistance, contact the VA National Telehealth Technology Help Desk at (855) 519-7116 Monday through Saturday, 7 a.m. through 11 p.m. ET.

Q18: What if the VAVC session doesn't load in the internet browser:

A18: For the best results, Google Chrome is the recommended browser.

Q19: The VAVC session is taking too long to load.

A19: Check the internet connection and speed on your VA computer.

If you are using Wi-Fi and still experience slow connectivity, move closer to your router.

It is recommended to visit the VAVC test site at least 15 minutes before the scheduled VAVC session.

Q20: How can the connection and audio/video settings be tested before the video appointment starts?

A20: To test, visit the VAVC test site on your VA computer.

For the best performance, join the IC in the same location where the internet connection and device are tested.

Q21: How does the claimant and/or representative join the IC with the conference host?

A21: The claimant and/or representative link is provided in the email invitation. They will remain in the virtual lobby until the conference host arrives.

For attendees of the IC, the virtual waiting room will be available 30 minutes before the scheduled start time of the meeting.

Q22: Can attendees message the conference host by typing during the video appointment?

A22: Yes. The attendees can send chat messages during the conference.

To hide the Chat Room during the session, tap the down arrow.

To unhide the Chat Room, tap the up arrow.

Q23: How do I mute my microphone during the IC session?

A23: To mute your microphone during the IC, click on the microphone icon.
   o A slash through the microphone icon will appear indicating that your microphone is muted.

   o To unmute, click on the microphone icon to remove the slash and then speak.

Q24: How do I hide my video feed, so the attendees cannot see me?

A24: To hide the video feed, click on the video camera icon.
   o A slash through the video icon will appear indicating your video feed is hidden.

   o To unhide, click on the video icon to remove the slash and the video feed will activate.

Q25: When the meeting is done, how do I end or 'hang up' from the IC session?

A25: To exit the session with the attendees, click the red circle with the phone icon. A red pop-up "Leave Session" box will appear.

Select **Yes, Leave** to leave, or select **No** to return to the session.

Once logging/leaving the session, it will bring you back to the VAVC login screen.

Q26: What happens if there is a crisis during the VAVC session?

A26: VAVC should not be used in an emergency. If this is a medical emergency, please call **911**.

If the crisis is with the claimant or representative, have them hang up and call 911.

If someone is in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, call the **Veterans Crisis Line at 988 and press 1.**

Q27:   What should I expect when I contact the VA National Telehealth Technology Help Desk for VAVC issues?

A27: You will be prompted to select the office designated to your IC, which will be the Office of Administrative Review (OAR).

For technical assistance for the IC with OAR, **select 3**. There is a menu option for Veterans but do not select that as it is a general help line that may not be able to provide assistance for the IC technical issues.

You will then receive an automated message stating: "Thank you for calling the Veterans Administration VAVC Helpdesk, please hold for the next available tech".

Other prompts to the help desk line are as follows:

- o If you are a veteran requiring general information about VAVC, Select 1 for assistance.
- o If you are calling for the Veterans Benefits Administration, Select 2 for VBA
- o **If you are calling for the Office of Administrative Review, Select 3 for OAR.**
- o If you are calling for the Board of Veterans' Appeals, Select 4 for BVA.