



Returning Higher-Level Reviews for Development

August 2022



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Course Description:

This course teaches learners how to return higher-level reviews (HLR) for development.

The Bottom Line

You review a higher-level review (HLR) and realize that the previous decision-maker failed to comply with VA's duty to assist or you have a difference of opinion on the evidence.

How do you make sure the Veteran's claim is processed correctly?

This course will teach you the steps to complete an HLR return properly.



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Instructor Notes:

So, what is the bottom line with returning higher-level reviews for development?

You review a higher-level review (HLR) and realize that the previous decision-maker failed to comply with VA's duty to assist or you have a difference of opinion on the evidence.

How do you make sure the Veteran's claim is processed correctly?

This course will teach you the steps to complete an HLR return properly.

Lesson Objectives

- Define the purpose and scope of an HLR return
- Explain the difference between duty to assist (DTA) and difference of opinion (DoO) returns
- Recognize the elements of and how to complete VA Form 20-0999, *Higher-Level Review Return*
- Explain how to complete rating HLR returns in VBMS-R
- Explain how to complete non-rating HLR returns



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Instructor Notes:

At the end of this training, given the training and handouts, learners will be able to successfully complete knowledge checks and pass the end-of-course assessment through instruction of the following objectives:

- Define the purpose and scope of an HLR return
- Explain the difference between duty to assist (DTA) and difference of opinion (DoO) returns
- Recognize the elements of and how to complete VA Form 20-0999, *Higher-Level Review Return*
- Explain how to complete HLR rating returns in VBMS-R
- Explain how to complete non-rating HLR returns

References

- [M21-5, 5.1., General Information on HLRs](#)
- [M21-5, 5.5., Errors in the Duty to Assist](#)
- [M21-5, 5.6., Non-Rating Issues](#)
- [HLR Returns Job Aid](#)



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Instructor Notes:

The references for today's training include:

- [M21-5, 5.1., General Information on HLRs](#)
- [M21-5, 5.5., Errors in the Duty to Assist](#)
- [M21-5, 5.6., Non-Rating Issues](#)
- [HLR Returns Job Aid](#)



Objective

Define the purpose and scope of
an HLR return



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Instructor Notes:

First, we will define the purpose and scope of an HLR return.

Purpose of an HLR Return

- The Appeals Modernization Act (AMA) became effective on February 19, 2019
- Higher-level reviewer performs *de novo* review on an HLR request
 - Deny the issue
 - Grant the issue
 - Return the issue
- HLR return
 - duty to assist (DTA) error
 - difference of opinion (DoO)



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Learning Objective: Define the purpose and scope of an HLR return

Instructor Notes:

VBA implemented *P.L. 115-55, the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 (Appeals Modernization Act (AMA))* effective February 19, 2019. Under AMA, Veterans have the option to select a higher-level review, which allows for a *de novo* review of the issue(s) identified on a completed VA Form 20-0996, *Decision Review Request: Higher-Level Review*. *De novo* means the reviewer reexamines and readjudicates the claim in question without deference to the prior decision, except for proper favorable findings.

The higher-level reviewer can deny the issue, grant the issue, or return the issue.

The reviewer can return an issue because of a duty to assist (DTA) error or difference of opinion (DoO). A DTA error arises when VA had an obligation under 38 C.F.R. § 3.159 to assist in obtaining certain evidence and VA failed to do so at the time of the prior decision. A DoO involves the reviewer re-weighing the prior evidence to make a new decision without determining that the prior

decision failed to properly assist the claimant.

Scope of an HLR Return

- Service verification
- Additional service treatment records (STR)
- Private medical records (PMR)
- VA outpatient treatment records (OPT)
- Social Security Administration (SSA) records
- Examinations and/or medical records
- Employment information



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Learning Objective: Define the purpose and scope of an HLR return

Instructor Notes:

An HLR return can ask for development as needed to fulfill the duty to assist or as needed under the difference of opinion, to include service verification, additional service treatment records (STR), private medical records (PMR), VA outpatient treatment records (OPT), Social Security Administration (SSA) records, examinations and/or medical opinions, and employment information.

Important: This list is not exhaustive, so it is imperative to review the claim carefully and ensure that all necessary development is documented.

Knowledge Check #1

- **Question:** What are the two bases for returning HLRs?
- **Answer:** The two bases for returning HLRs are duty to assist and difference of opinion.

Check on Learning



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Learning Objective: Define the purpose and scope of an HLR return

Instructor Notes:

****IMPORTANT:** Slide contains animations. Click to reveal the question and answer to students.**

Here is our first knowledge check.

Question: What are the two bases for returning HLRs?

Answer: The two bases for returning HLRs are duty to assist and difference of opinion.



Objective

Explain the difference between duty to assist (DTA) and difference of opinion (DoO) returns



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Instructor Notes:

Next, let's explain the difference between duty to assist (DTA) and difference of opinion (DoO) returns.

Duty to Assist Error

Two components:

- Obligation to assist in obtaining certain evidence
- Failure to do so at the time of the prior decision



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Learning Objective: Explain the difference between duty to assist (DTA) and difference of opinion (DOO) returns

Instructor Notes:

A duty to assist error requires two components: VA's obligation under 38 C.F.R. §3.159 to assist in obtaining certain evidence *and* VA's failure to do so at the time of the prior decision.

A DTA error is a failure during the processing of the reviewed decision (e.g., rating decision, SOC, etc.) to properly apply the provisions of for gathering evidence. These deficiencies include omitting development or failing to request certain examinations.

Reviewers should apply the procedures for correcting DTA errors when also developing to decide downstream issues of a grant of benefits not yet fully implemented but indicated as favorable findings.

Missing VA Treatment Records

- Veteran alleges treatment at VA facility but records not properly associated with eFolder
- Constructive notice:
 - When the claimant relates specific existence and location of records
 - Mere existence of records is not enough



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Learning Objective: Explain the difference between duty to assist (DTA) and difference of opinion (DOO) returns

Instructor Notes:

A DTA error may occur when the Veteran or representative alleges treatment at a VA facility, but the records were not properly associated with the eFolder and considered prior to VA issuing its decision, so that decision did not list those records as evidence. The higher-level reviewer must return any affected issue(s) for correction unless the reviewer can grant the maximum benefit.

Note: Constructive notice of VA medical evidence exists when the claimant relates its specific existence and location. The mere existence of medical evidence somewhere in a VA system of records does not constitute constructive notice, and therefore cannot qualify as a DTA error. Rather, the claimant or representative must provide information sufficient to locate such records.

Difference of Opinion

- Additional development needed
- Prior decision did not necessarily fail to properly assist
- HLR reviewer weighs same evidence differently



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Learning Objective: Explain the difference between duty to assist (DTA) and difference of opinion (DoO) returns

Instructor Notes:

The exercise of a difference of opinion may lead to additional development. However, with a DoO, that need for development does not necessarily mean that the prior decision failed to properly assist the claimant.

The HLR reviewer, who is, by definition, a senior and more experienced adjudicator, may weigh the same evidence differently than the previous adjudicator. The reviewer documents the return on the same form for DoO as for DTA; however, the return does not constitute a DTA error as the previous decision was not necessarily incorrect. Rather, the amended decision mandates additional development to resolve.

For example, the HLR requests service connection for a right knee condition, which was previously denied for no current diagnosis without ordering an exam, as there were no treatment records after service showing complaints for the right knee. The reviewer weighs the evidence differently and decides to order an exam. The reviewer will

document the need for an exam on VA Form 20-0999 and return the request for development so VA may order the exam. This was not a DTA error because the prior decision maker was not obligated to order an exam. The higher-level reviewer weighed the evidence differently and decided to order the exam, making the return a DoO.

Maximum Benefit

- Highest schedular evaluation allowed by regulation
- Award of the benefit sought for ancillary benefits
- Only applicable if there is a DTA error or required development



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Learning Objective: Explain the difference between duty to assist (DTA) and difference of opinion (DOO) returns

Instructor Notes:

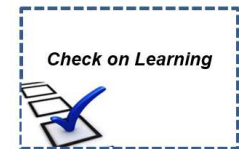
The maximum benefit is the highest schedular evaluation allowed by regulation for the issue under review. For ancillary benefits, an award of the benefit sought is the maximum benefit. HLRs need to consider downstream issues when granting any benefit. The highest schedular evaluation applies even if the issue is SC, as VA considers evaluation to be a downstream issue of SC.

The reviewer must return the issue(s) for development, unless they can grant the claimant the maximum benefit.

Do not the apply maximum benefit when there is no DTA error or required development (i.e., when the evidentiary record is complete). The maximum benefit rule only applies with the evidentiary record is incomplete.

Knowledge Check #2

- **Scenario:** Veteran submits HLR for evaluation of PTSD, currently at 50 percent. Review of the evidence shows all development was completed and the exam was sufficient. The reviewer decides to confirm the evaluation.
- **Question:** Is the maximum benefit rule applicable?
- **Answer:** No, the maximum benefit rule is not applicable because the evidentiary record is complete.



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Learning Objective: Explain the difference between duty to assist (DTA) and difference of opinion (DOO) returns

Instructor Notes:

****IMPORTANT:** Slide contains animations. Click to reveal the scenario, question and answer to students.**

Scenario: Veteran submits HLR for evaluation of PTSD, currently at 50 percent. Review of the evidence shows all development was completed and the exam was sufficient. The reviewer decides to confirm the evaluation.

Question: Is the maximum benefit rule applicable?

Answer: No, the maximum benefit rule is not applicable because the evidentiary record is complete.



Objective

Recognize the elements of and how
to complete a VA Form 20-0999,
Higher-Level Review Return



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Instructor Notes:

Now, we will recognize the elements of and how to complete a VA Form 20-0999,
Higher-Level Review Return.

VA Form 20-0999, Section I

Department of Veterans Affairs		HIGHER-LEVEL REVIEW RETURN	
POA	DATE OF RETURN:	REGIONAL OFFICE NUMBER	
NAME OF CLAIMANT		VA FILE NUMBER	
SECTION I			
THE HIGHER-LEVEL REVIEW BEING RETURNED RELATES TO THE FOLLOWING ISSUES:			
LIST ALL SPECIFIC ISSUES BEING RETURNED <i>(Continue on additional page as necessary)</i>		DATE OF VA DECISION NOTICE	

Identifying information for claimant

List of returned issues with date of VA decision notice

Learning Objective: Recognize the elements of and how to complete a VA Form 20-0999, Higher-Level Review Return

Instructor Notes:

In order to understand how to properly return an HLR for either DTA or DOO, we must examine the elements of VA Form 20-0999.

The initial section of VA Form 20-0999 contains the identifying information for the claimant. This includes the Power of Attorney, if applicable; the date of the return; the Regional Office number; the name of the claimant, and the VA file number.

Section I contains the returned issues. The higher-level reviewer should list each issue individually on a separate line; this allows the development team to read and process the return efficiently. For example, if the higher-level reviewer returns the issues of the left knee and right knee, the reviewer should list each knee separately, instead of writing bilateral knees on one line to mean both the left and right knees.

Next to each issue the reviewer should list the date of the VA notice decision for the returned issue. For example, if the left knee was denied with rating decision dated January 4, 2021, and notification letter dated January 5, 2021, the reviewer should write 01/05/2021 on the date of VA decision notice.

VA Form 20-0999, Section II

SECTION II	
THE HIGHER-LEVEL REVIEW HAS BEEN RETURNED FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:	
DUTY TO ASSIST ERRORS <i>(Select all that apply)</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE MEDICAL RECORDS	<input type="checkbox"/> FEDERAL MEDICAL RECORDS
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER MEDICAL RECORDS	<input type="checkbox"/> EXAMINATION OR MEDICAL OPINION
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER RECORDS	
REQUIRED DEVELOPMENT - DIFFERENCE OF OPINION <i>(Select all that apply)</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> FEDERAL RECORDS	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER RECORDS
<input type="checkbox"/> EXAMINATION OR MEDICAL OPINION	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER DEVELOPMENT
EXPLANATION FOR ITEMS CHECKED <i>(Continue on additional page as necessary)</i>	

Categories of development required

Explanation of checked boxes and development



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Learning Objective: Recognize the elements of and how to complete a VA Form 20-0999, Higher-Level Review Return

Instructor Notes:

Section II of VA Form 20-0999 flows from Section I's listing of issues to indicate which categories of development are required. The higher-level reviewer should check all applicable categories. Notice that the returned reasons are categorized under duty to assist errors or difference of opinion.

The reviewer should indicate all necessary development categories. Checking the correct boxes ensures the claim is processed properly and the correct claim label is attached. The next box in Section II, titled "Explanation for Items Checked," is where the reviewer will state the actual development that is needed. The information in this box is where the VSR will turn for the development actions needed on the claim. The instructions here must be as complete and accurate as possible to ensure the claim is processed timely. Any unclear instructions require the VSR to do additional work or contact the reviewer for clarification which will delay the claim.

For example, if the reviewer returns the issue of hearing loss for an exam and medical opinion because VA failed in its obligation to obtain one with the previous decision, the reviewer should check off the "Examination Or Medical Opinion" box in Section II under "Duty to Assist Errors." In the Explanation box, the reviewer must explain the basis for the exam and medical opinion. The explanation should state what kind of exam is needed, what kind of medical opinion is needed, any additional verbiage the VSR should include in the request, and any additional information needed to properly develop the claim.




Make sure when completing the Explanation box, that the instructions are clearly labeled with the contention, if there are multiple contentions. For example, if the return is for the right knee and hearing loss, the explanation box should clearly label the contentions separately, preferably with numerical identification. This can be done by writing "1. Right knee. Please request a knee exam and direct medical opinion for the right knee based on right knee complaints in service. 2. Hearing loss. Please request a hearing loss exam and medical opinion based on the Veteran's MOS of infantryman."

VA Form 20-0999, Section III

SECTION III	
FAVORABLE FINDINGS: LIST SPECIFIC FAVORABLE FINDINGS BY ISSUE <i>(Continue on additional page as necessary)</i>	
REVIEWER'S ID:	REVIEWER'S OFFICE:

Favorable findings (could indicate these are on rating decision)

DRO information

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Learning Objective: Recognize the elements of and how to complete a VA Form 20-0999, Higher-Level Review Return

Instructor Notes:

Section III of VA Form 20-0999 is where the higher-level reviewer lists any favorable findings by issue. Note that it is also acceptable for the higher-level reviewer to indicate in this box that the favorable findings are in the rating decision and direct attention to the rating decision for the favorable findings. This could be denoted with a statements such as "Favorable Findings listed in VBMS-R Reasons and Basis" or "See Rating Decision for Favorable Findings."

The bottom of this page includes the reviewer's ID, which could either be their LAN ID or their name, and the reviewer's office.

VA Form 20-0999 Page 2

CONTINUATION (Add pages as necessary)

Additional information, i.e. continuation of development steps

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Learning Objective: Recognize the elements of and how to complete a VA Form 20-0999, Higher-Level Review Return

Instructor Notes:

Page 2 of VA Form 20-0999 is simply a blank page that allows for continuation of any development steps from the first page.

Note, sometimes, the development actions may be extensive to the point that they do not fit on both pages on a VA Form 20-0999. In those situations, the higher-level reviewer may upload a separate form, either another VA Form 20-0999 or VA Form 21-6789, *Deferred Rating Decision*.

Knowledge Check #3

- **Scenario:** A higher-level reviewer determines that a DTA error exists on a claim for dependency and additional development is required.
- **Question:** What is the name of the form on which the reviewer puts the development directions to correct the DTA error?
- **Answer:** VA Form 20-0999, *Higher-Level Review Return*. A higher-level reviewer should put the development directions on a VA Form 20-0999.



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Learning Objective: Recognize the elements of and how to complete a VA Form 20-0999, Higher-Level Review Return

Instructor Notes:

****IMPORTANT:** Slide contains animations. Click to reveal the scenario, question and answer to students.**

Now for knowledge check #3.

Scenario: A higher-level reviewer determines that a DTA error exists on a claim for dependency and additional development is required.

Question: What is the name of the form on which the reviewer puts the development directions to correct the DTA error?

Answer: VA Form 20-0999, *Higher-Level Review Return*. A higher-level reviewer should put the development directions on a VA Form 20-0999.



Objective

Explain how to complete rating HLR
returns in VBMS-R



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Instructor Notes:

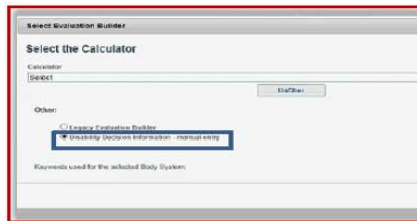
Let's explain how to complete rating HLR returns in VBMS-R.

HLR Return in VBMS-R

- Step 1: On the Issue Management Screen, Add the Contention and Select Enter Decision.



- Step 2: Select Disability Decision Information-manual entry option.



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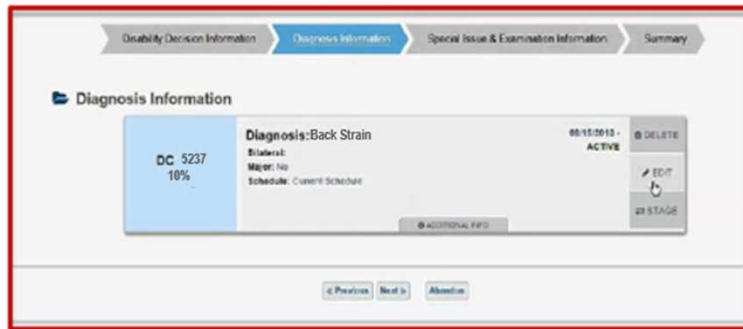
Learning Objective: Explain how to complete the HLR return in VBMS-R

Instructor Notes:

The higher-level reviewer returns HLRs in VBMS-R. On the Issue Management screen, Add the contention and select Enter Decision. Then select the Disability Decision Information-manual entry option.

HLR Return in VBMS-R (continued)

- Step 3: From the Diagnosis Information tab, select Edit on the Contention Block



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Learning Objective: Explain how to complete the HLR return in VBMS-R

Instructor Notes:

From the Diagnosis Information tab, select Edit on the Contention Block.

DTA Returns in VBMS-R

The next three slides will explain the steps for a DTA error

- Step 1: Select the appropriate DTA option from the Supplementary Decision drop-down menu

The screenshot shows the 'Diagnosis Information' section of the VBMS-R system. The 'Supplementary Decision' dropdown menu is open, displaying a list of options. The 'DTA Error - Exam/MO' option is selected. The main form area shows the 'Edit Issue' section with fields for 'Primary Diagnostic Code' (5237), 'Secondary Diagnostic Code', 'Diagnosis' (Back Strain), and 'From Date' (05/16/2023). The 'Original Date of Denial' field is also visible.



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Learning Objective: Explain how to complete the HLR return in VBMS-R

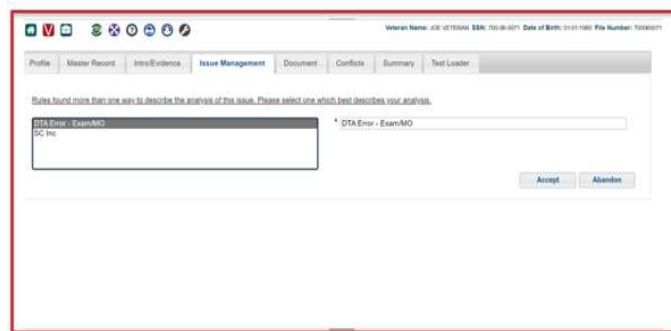
Instructor Notes:

The next three slides will explain the steps for a DTA error in VBMS-R.

From the Supplementary Decision drop-down menu, select the appropriate DTA option. The options include DTA Error – Exam/MO; DTA Error – Fed Recs; DTA Error – Other Recs; and DTA Error – PMRs.

DTA Returns in VBMS-R (continued 1)

- Step 2: Confirm the DTA selection made on the previous drop-down menu



The screenshot displays a web application interface for a veteran's record. At the top, there is a navigation bar with tabs: Profile, Master Record, Intro/Evidence, Issue Management, Document, Conflicts, Summary, and Text Loader. Below the navigation bar, a message reads: "Issues found more than one way to describe the analysis of this issue. Please select one which best describes your analysis." A dropdown menu is open, showing "DTA Error - Exam MO" as the selected option. To the right of the dropdown, the text "DTA Error - Exam MO" is displayed. At the bottom right of the form area, there are two buttons: "Accept" and "Abandon". The top right corner of the interface shows the following information: "Veteran Name: JCS (VETERAN) SSN: 750-08-0079 Date of Birth: 01-01-1955 File Number: 10300079".



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Learning Objective: Explain how to complete the HLR return in VBMS-R

Instructor Notes:

On the following screen, confirm the DTA selection made on the previous drop-down menu.

DTA Returns in VBMS-R (continued 2)

- Step 3: Enter the action needed to complete the DTA error

The screenshot shows the 'Analysis' pop-up window in VBMS-R. At the top, it displays the veteran's information: 'Veteran Name: JOE VETERAN SSN: 700-06-0071 Date of Birth: 01-01-1980 File Number: 700000071'. The main content area contains the following text:

The issue of Back Strain was returned for correction of a duty to assist error in the prior decision. We failed to get an examination(s) and/or medical opinion(s). We will develop for []

An evaluation of 10 percent is assigned from May 25, 2022.

We have assigned a 10 percent evaluation for your Back Strain based on:

- 38 CFR §4.59 allows consideration of functional loss due to painful motion to be rated to at least the minimum compensable rating for a particular point. Since you demonstrate painful motion of the thoracolumbar spine, the minimum compensable evaluation of 10 percent is assigned.

Additional symptom(s) include:

- Combined range of motion of the thoracolumbar spine within normal range
- Forward flexion of the thoracolumbar spine within normal range
- Objective evidence of flare-ups

The provisions of 38 CFR §4.40 and §4.45 concerning functional loss due to pain, fatigue, weakness, or lack of endurance, incoordination, and flare-ups, as cited in *DeLuca v. Brown and Mitchell v. Shinseki*, have been considered and applied under 38 CFR §4.59.

A higher evaluation of 20 percent is not warranted for diseases and injuries of the thoracolumbar spine unless the evidence shows:

- Combined range of motion of the thoracolumbar spine not greater than 120 degrees, or,



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Learning Objective: Explain how to complete the HLR return in VBMS-R

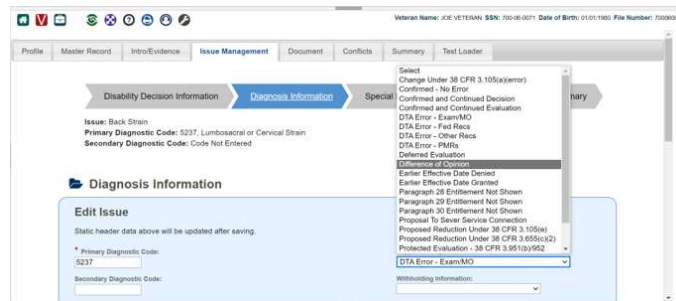
Instructor Notes:

In the pop-up Analysis bog, enter the action(s) needed to complete the DTA error. Here, since the DTA error was for exam and/or medical opinion, the blank box should include verbiage such as “a new examination” or “clarification of previous examination.” Build the rating narrative on the Document Decision screen and select Save as normal for any issue in VBMS-R.

DoO Returns in VBMS-R

The next slides explain the steps for a DoO return

- Step 1: Select Difference of Opinion from the Supplementary Decision drop-down menu



Learning Objective: Explain how to complete the HLR return in VBMS-R

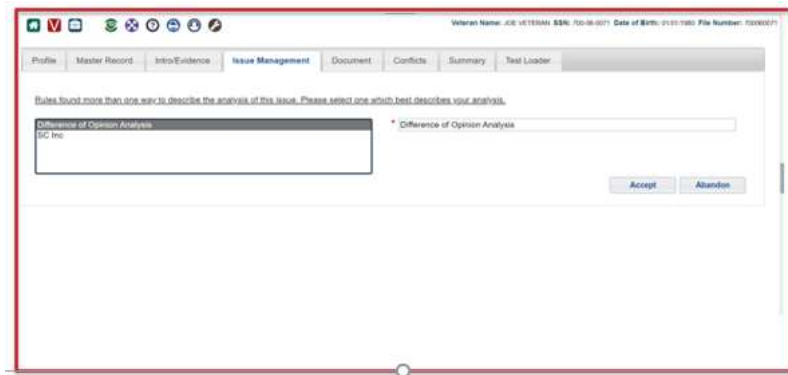
Instructor Notes:

The next three slides will explain the steps for a DoO return in VBMS-R.

From the Supplementary Decision drop-down menu, select the Difference of Opinion option.

DoO Returns in VBMS-R (continued 1)

- Step 2: Confirm the DoO selection made on the previous drop-down menu



Warren Name: JCE VETERAN SSN: 700-98-0071 Date of Birth: 01/01/1980 File Number: 70000071

Profile Master Record Info/Evidence **Issue Management** Document Conflicts Summary Test Loader

Rules found more than one way to describe the analysis of this issue. Please select one which best describes your analysis.

Difference of Opinion Analysis * Difference of Opinion Analysis

DC Inc.

Accept Abandon



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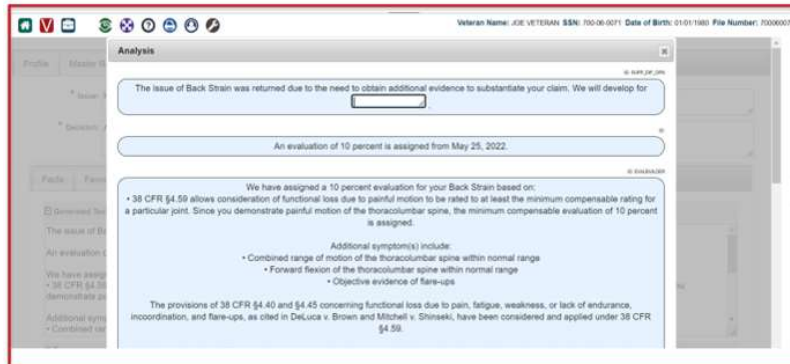
Learning Objective: Explain how to complete the HLR return in VBMS-R

Instructor Notes:

On the following screen, confirm the DoO selection made on the previous drop-down menu.

DoO Returns in VBMS-R (continued 2)

- Step 3: Enter the action needed to complete the DoO return



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Learning Objective: Explain how to complete the HLR return in VBMS-R

Instructor Notes:

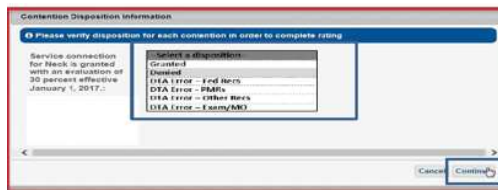
In the pop-up Analysis box, enter the action(s) needed to complete the DoO return. Here, the DRO can enter verbiage such as “a new examination” or “clarification of previous examination.” Build the rating narrative on the Document Decision screen and select Save as normal for any issue in VBMS-R.

HLR Dispositions

- Step 1: Complete a decision for all contentions. From the Documents tab, preview the Narrative and Codesheet and select Finalize



- Step 2: Select the appropriate DTA Error/DoO from the Contention Disposition Information menu and complete the rating



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Learning Objective: Explain how to complete the HLR return in VBMS-R

Instructor Notes:

The reviewer must dispose of all HLR issues after they complete a decision for all contentions. From the Documents tab, preview the Narrative and Codesheet and select Finalize. Select the appropriate DTA error/DoO from the Contention Disposition Information menu and complete the rating.

Knowledge Check #4

- **Question:** True or False? The reviewer is not required to include the required development in the Analysis box in VBMS-R since those steps are stated on the VA Form 20-0999.
- **Answer:** False. In the Analysis box, the reviewer is required to include the required development as this information is conveyed to the Veteran in the rating decision.



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Learning Objective: Explain how to complete the HLR return in VBMS-R

Instructor Notes:

****IMPORTANT:** Slide contains animations. Click to reveal the scenario, question and answer to students.**

Question: True or False? The reviewer is not required to include the required development in the Analysis box in VBMS-R since those steps are stated on the VA Form 20-0999.

Answer: False. On the Analysis box, the reviewer is required to include the required development as this information is conveyed to the Veteran in the rating decision.



Objective

Explain how to complete non-rating
HLR returns



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Instructor Notes:

Finally, we'll explain how to complete non-rating HLR returns.

Completing Non-Rating HLR Returns

- Determine the DTA or DoO in the non-rating claim
- Complete VA Form 20-0999
- Upload VA Form 20-0999 into VBMS
- Select the disposition in VBMS-A to close out the HLR



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Learning Objective: Explain how to complete non-rating HLR returns

Instructor Notes:

Completing non-rating HLR returns involves similar steps to completing rating HLR returns.

First, the higher-level reviewer must determine whether the return is for a DTA or DoO. Second, the reviewer must complete VA Form 20-0999 as explained in the previous slides. After completing the form, the reviewer uploads VA Form 20-0999 and updates the claim to send it back to the development team for action. Finally, the reviewer must select the disposition in VBMS-A to close out the HLR.

HLR Return in VBMS-A

Follow the instructions below to document non-rating decision dispositions in VBMS-Awards.

Step 1: From the Record Decisions Screen Add the Claim Type and select Generate Award

The screenshot shows the 'Record Decisions' screen in VBMS-Awards. At the top, there is a dropdown menu for 'Show Only Decisions Pertinent to This Benefit:' with 'CIP Compensation and Improved Pension' selected. Below this is a section titled 'Select Claims to Associate with the Award Action:' which contains two tables. The 'Available Claims' table has columns for 'Claim Type', 'Claim Date', and 'Claim Status'. It lists two entries: 'High-Level Review/No Rating' with 'SERVICE PENSION' and '10/01/2018', and 'High-Level Review/No Rating' with 'SERVICE PENSION' and '10/01/2018'. The 'Selected Claims' table is currently empty. Below the tables are buttons for 'Add All', 'Remove', and 'Display All Claims'. At the bottom of the screen, there is a row of buttons: 'Generate Award', 'Review Current Proposal', 'Request Review', 'Award History', 'Decision History', 'Details', 'Reverts Last Add Award', 'Prints', and 'Return to All Awards'. The 'Generate Award' button is highlighted with a red box.



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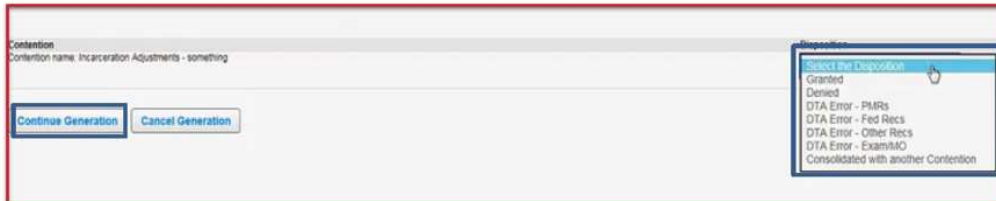
Learning Objective: Explain how to complete non-rating HLR returns

Instructor Notes:

The next few slides will explain the process to document non-rating decision dispositions in VBMS-Awards. On the record decision screen, add the claim type and select generate award.

HLR Return in VBMS-A (continued 1)

Step 2: The Contention screen populates, requiring users to select a Disposition before continuing with Award Generation. The Disposition will be recorded upon Authorization of the pending end product (EP).



Note: The system will automatically establish an 040 EP if any "DTA Error" option is selected.



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Learning Objective: Explain how to complete non-rating HLR returns

Instructor Notes:

When the contention screen populates, users will be required to select a Disposition before continuing with Award Generation. After the award is authorized, the Dispositions will be recorded and an EP 040 will automatically be established.

HLR Return in VBMS-A (continued 2)

Step 3: Confirm the claimant's Payment Address



CP Payment Address

2122 W TAYLOR ST
CHICAGO IL 60612-4281

Previous Beneficiary 1 of 1 Next Beneficiary

Payment Will Be Sent to the CP Payment Address.
Selecting Continue Generation Will Generate the Award.

Selecting Enter EFT Address Will Allow you To Change the Address Using an EFT Format.

If the Address Change Requires a Postal Format. Please Change the Address Using the Change of Address Process in Share.

Selecting Cancel Generation will return you to Record Decisions.

Continue Generation Enter EFT Address Cancel Generation



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Learning Objective: Explain how to complete non-rating HLR returns

Instructor Notes:

Next, the user will confirm the claimant's payment address and award amount.

HLR Return in VBMS-A (continued 3)

Step 4: Confirm the Award amount and Review eDocument before sending for Authorization

Current and Proposed Award Authorization

Current Award: Proposed Award: Net Effect \$1,265.40

Expanded View: Details: Compensation

Effective	Awd Gross	Awd Net	Dis Level	Spec Pct	Adm Gross	Tot Ad	BECA Ad	Net Chp Ad	Oth Ad	Tot Pay Ad	Dis Pay Ad	Tot Ad	Tot Net	Tot Wth
12/01/2018	\$1,113.99	\$1,113.99	300	Provision										

Display Non-Covered Change Line or the Award: Display All Award Lines

Selected Award Line Details

Military Ent: \$ # Mth # Sub # Par Tot Ad BECA Ad Tot Pay Ad Dis Pay Ad CRDP Amt CRSC Amt

Award Reasons: Cost of Living Adjustment

Beneficiary: TRENCE FROBISHER

Beneficiary Type: Primary Beneficiary

Amount: \$1,113.99

Beneficiary: TRENCE FROBISHER

Pay Status: Active

Last Paid On: 10/01/2018

Paid Through: 08/02/2018

Pending Suspense/Reserve Action

Net Effect: \$1,265.40

Refus Pay Date: 12/01/2017

Buttons: Return Award, Save eDoc, Decision History, Award History, GAD, Get Letter, Return to Search, Return to Record Decision



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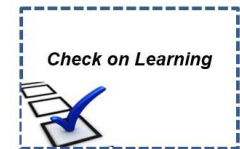
Learning Objective: Explain how to complete non-rating HLR returns

Instructor Notes:

Finally, after reviewing the eDocument, send the claim for authorization.

Knowledge Check #5

- **Question:** Is the non-rating higher-level reviewer required to complete VA Form 20-0999 for a return?
- **Answer:** Yes, the non-rating higher-level reviewer is required to complete VA Form 20-0999 to properly document and track the HLR return.



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Learning Objective: Explain how to complete non-rating HLR returns

Instructor Notes:

****IMPORTANT:** Slide contains animations. Click to reveal the scenario, question and answer to students.**

Question: Is the non-rating higher-level reviewer required to complete VA Form 20-0999 for a return?

Answer: Yes, the non-rating higher-level reviewer is required to complete VA Form 20-0999 to properly document and track the HLR return.

Course Summary

- Purpose and scope of an HLR return
- Duty to assist (DTA) and difference of opinion (DoO)
- VA Form 20-0999, *Higher-Level Review Return*
- Complete rating HLR returns in VBMS-R
- Complete non-rating HLR returns



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Learning Objective:

Instructor Notes:

Returning HLRs for Development:

- Define the purpose and scope of an HLR return
- Explain the difference between duty to assist (DTA) and difference of opinion (DoO) returns
- Recognize the elements of and how to complete VA Form 20-0999, *Higher-Level Review Return*
- Explain how to complete rating HLR returns in VBMS-R
- Explain how to complete non-rating HLR returns

Questions?



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Instructor Notes:

Are there any additional questions?

Next Steps

- An assessment and satisfaction survey have been assigned to you in TMS
- You have unlimited attempts to complete the assessment and may answer one question incorrectly to achieve a passing score
- Be sure to complete the survey and assessment to receive credit for this training



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Instructor Notes:

An assessment and satisfaction survey have been assigned to you in TMS. You have unlimited attempts to complete the assessment and may answer one question incorrectly to achieve a passing score. Completing both will allow you to receive credit for this training.