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Subject: Interim Field Guidance - VBMS Defect For S/C Death Claims
Date: Wednesday, January 11, 2023 12:37:49 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)
Importance: High

January, 9, 2023

Directors,

On January 8, 2023, a defect was introduced into the VBMS production environment affecting ESRs for **claims involving deceased Claimants**. We are currently working on a fix to this defect. End Users should refer to the interim guidance below until the defect is resolved.

Aggravation and Service-Connection (Death) Medical Opinions S/C Disabilities Selection

-- Select Medical Opinion --

- Aggravation of a non-service connected disability by a service connected disability
- Aggravation of a pre-existing condition
- Audio Special Language based on MOS-Related Hazardous Noise Exposure for Accrued
- Cause of death based on MOS-related asbestos exposure (Navy only)
- Combat
- Compensation under 38 U.S.C. 1151
- Direct service connection
- General medical gulf war opinion (CPD)
- Military Sexual Trauma (MST) for Accrued
- Other
- Reconciliation of conflicting medical evidence
- Respiratory Opinion based on MOS-Related Asbestos exposure (Navy Only) for Accrued
- Secondary service connection
- Service connection for the cause of death based on U.S.C. 1151
- Service connection for the cause of death based on vital organ
- Service-Connection for the Cause of Death - Based on Service Connected Disability
- Service-Connection for the Cause of Death - Providing Service Connected Nexus
- Southwest Asia Brain Cancer Medical Opinion

-- Select Medical Opinion --

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-- Select Medical Opinion --

The defect will affect the portion of the **“Aggravation of a non-service connected disability by a service connected disability”** and **“Service Connection for the Cause of Death – Based on Service Connected Disability”** Medical Opinion that identifies the service-connected disability(ies) that is/are causing the aggravation or S/C Death. Normally, **none** of the service-connected disabilities of record will be automatically selected; however, the defect will cause **all** service-connected disabilities of record to be selected.

* Principal Cause of Death

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* Contributing Cause of Death

* Please choose one or both from Service Connected Disabilities and Contention Names

Service Connected Disabilities

- traumatic brain injury
- tinnitus
- diplopia
- bilateral hearing loss

Until further notice, the end user should **unselect all** service-connected disabilities that they do not want included in the medical opinion. If the end user **does not unselect** these disabilities, the ESR **will request** an opinion for those unrelated service-connected disabilities.

Example:

The Claimant is claiming that the Veteran's service-connected traumatic brain injury has caused their death. The Veteran is service-connected for traumatic brain injury, tinnitus, diplopia, and bilateral hearing loss.

The VSR begins the exam request process. On the **Contention Information** tab, once the VSR selects the "**Service-Connection for the Cause of Death – Based on Service Connected Disability**" Medical Opinion from the drop down, they will notice that all four of the above-mentioned service-connected conditions have been selected (see picture above).

The VSR should unselect tinnitus, diplopia, and bilateral hearing loss as they are not part of the claim. The traumatic brain injury disability should remain selected. The VSR can then continue with the exam request process as normal, including a **close review** of the ESR before submitting to the Vendor.

Any questions regarding this interim guidance should be directed to [Medical Disability Examination Office](#).

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