



PENSION AND FIDUCIARY SERVICE

PMC VSR Core Course Phase 4:
Introduction to Pension Management

Lesson 1: Stages of a Pension Claim

Trainee Guide

July 11, 2017

Version 1.0

**Lesson 1: Stages of a Pension Claim
Trainee Guide**

Stages of a Pension Claim Lesson

Lesson Overview

| Topic | Description |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Time Estimate: | 1 hour |
| Purpose of the Lesson: | The purpose of this lesson is to introduce PMC VSRs to the stages of a pension claim and the activities in each stage. |
| Prerequisite Training Requirements: | Prior to taking the Stages of a Pension Claim lesson, trainees must complete PMC VSR Core Course Phases 1–3. |
| Target Audience: | This lesson is for entry level PMC VSRs. |
| Lesson References: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master Course Map learning aid • M21-1 III.ii.1 (Initial Screening Process) • M21-1 V.iii.1.A (General Information on the Effect Income and Net Worth Have on Pension and Parents DIC) • M21-1 III.v.2.A (Decision Authorization) • M21-1 III.v.2.B (Decision Notices) |
| Knowledge Check: | Phase 4: Introduction to Pension Management Knowledge Check |
| Technical Competencies: | Processing Claims (PMC VSR) |
| Lesson Objectives: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the stages of a pension claim <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Describe the purpose for initial screening and determining eligibility ○ Describe the purpose of claims development and duty to assist ○ Describe the purpose of award determination and promulgation ○ Describe the purpose of claimant notification ○ Describe the purpose of claim maintenance |

Lesson 1: Stages of a Pension Claim Trainee Guide

| Topic | Description |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| What You Need: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainee Guide • Master Course Map learning aid • Slides • Projector • Access to VBA Intranet • Chunking Worksheet • Scissors |

| PowerPoint Slides | Notes |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| <p>Stages of a Pension Claim</p> <p>You Are Here</p> <pre> graph TD P1[PHASE 1 Mandatory Training] --> P2[PHASE 2 PMC VSR Foundation] P2 --> P3[PHASE 3 PMC VSR Resources] P3 --> P4[PHASE 4 Introduction to Pension Management] P4 --> P5[PHASE 5 Stages of Claim] P5 --> P6[PHASE 6 Processing Claims] </pre> | |

**Lesson 1: Stages of a Pension Claim
Trainee Guide**

| PowerPoint Slides | Notes |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <p>Why It Matters!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding the stages of a pension claim will help you efficiently and effectively process pension claims. | |
| <p>Technical Competencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Processing Claims (PMC VSR) | |
| <p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe the stages of a pension claim.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Describe the purpose for initial screening and determining eligibility.○ Describe the purpose of claims development and duty to assist.○ Describe the purpose of award determination and promulgation.○ Describe the purpose of claimant notification.○ Describe the purpose of claim maintenance. | |

Lesson 1: Stages of a Pension Claim Trainee Guide

| PowerPoint Slides | Notes |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| <p>Knowledge Check</p> <pre> graph TD P1[PHASE 1 Mandatory Training] --> C1{Lesson Specific} P1 --> P2[PHASE 2 PMC VSR Foundation] P2 --> C2{TPSS Knowledge Check} P2 --> P3[PHASE 3 PMC VSR Resources] P3 --> C3{Phase 3 Knowledge Check} P3 --> P4[PHASE 4 Introduction to Pension Management] P4 --> C4{Phase 4 Knowledge Check} P4 --> P5[PHASE 5 Stages of Claim] P5 --> C5{Multiple Knowledge Check} P5 --> P6[PHASE 6 Processing Claims] P6 --> C6{Multiple Knowledge Check} style C4 stroke:#0000FF,stroke-width:2px </pre> <p>The diagram illustrates a six-phase process for pension claims. Each phase is represented by an orange rounded rectangle, and each knowledge check is a green diamond. Arrows indicate the flow from one phase to the next, and from each phase to its corresponding knowledge check. The 'Phase 4 Knowledge Check' diamond is highlighted with a blue border.</p> | |
| <p>Practice Exercise—Chunk Puzzle Worksheet (1 of 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Divide into groups of two or three. ○ Review the chunk puzzle worksheet in the trainee guide. ○ Cut out the chunks or work out the solution on a separate piece of paper. ○ Be prepared to discuss your answers. • Time allowed: 15–20 minutes | |

**Lesson 1: Stages of a Pension Claim
Trainee Guide**

| PowerPoint Slides | Notes |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| <p>Practice Exercise—Chunk Puzzle Worksheet (2 of 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hints:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Locate the last chunk with a period. You can work backward from this chunk. Look for other chunks that could precede this chunk.○ Any chunk that begins with a space is the beginning of a new word. Look for other chunks that could follow this chunk.○ Write down different words and phrases and rearrange them into a sentence later. Put a mark next to the chunks that you have already incorporated in your solution. | |

Practice Exercise—Chunk Puzzle Worksheet

1. In what stage would you evaluate incoming material received by the VA Pension Management Center (PMC)?

NG. INI CRE L S ENI TIA

Answer:

2. In what stage would you issue a written correspondence notifying the claimant of the decision the VA made on their claim?

*Lesson 1: Stages of a Pension Claim
Trainee Guide*

NT AI N IC IO N. CL OT
AT MA IF

Answer:

3. In what stage would you notify the claimant of the information or evidence necessary to substantiate the claim?

PME IM ELO NT. CLA
DEV

Answer:

4. What is the final stage in adjudicating a claim, after all evidence has been collected and reviewed?

DET INA N / AWA N. TIO
OMU TIO RD LGA
ERM PR

Answer:

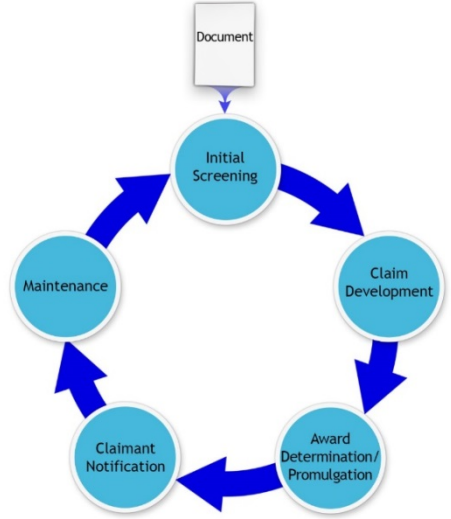
**Lesson 1: Stages of a Pension Claim
Trainee Guide**

5. What is the stage for non-rating claims received after an original eligibility determination?

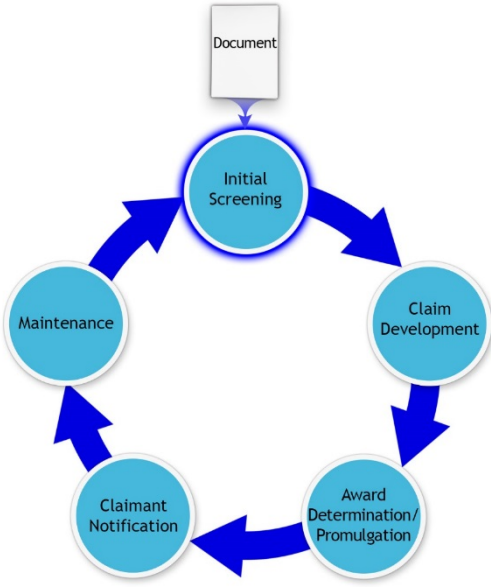
INT E IM S. MA CLA EN
ANC

Answer:

**Lesson 1: Stages of a Pension Claim
Trainee Guide**

| PowerPoint Slides | Notes |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| <p>Stages of a Pension Claim</p>  <pre>graph TD; Document[Document] --> IS((Initial Screening)); IS --> CD((Claim Development)); CD --> ADP((Award Determination/Promulgation)); ADP --> CN((Claimant Notification)); CN --> M((Maintenance)); M --> IS;</pre> <p>The diagram illustrates the stages of a pension claim as a continuous cycle. It begins with a 'Document' box at the top, which points to the 'Initial Screening' stage. The cycle then proceeds clockwise through 'Claim Development', 'Award Determination/Promulgation', 'Claimant Notification', and 'Maintenance', before returning to 'Initial Screening'.</p> | |

**Lesson 1: Stages of a Pension Claim
Trainee Guide**

| PowerPoint Slides | Notes |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| <p>Initial Screening (1 of 2)</p>  <pre>graph TD; Document[Document] --> IS((Initial Screening)); IS --> CD((Claim Development)); CD --> ADP((Award Determination/Promulgation)); ADP --> CN((Claimant Notification)); CN --> M((Maintenance)); M --> IS;</pre> <p>Purpose: Review all incoming applications, correspondence, and evidence to determine if a claim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Warrants priority processing because of its nature or facts• Is submitted with evidence that requires immediate review by the rating activity• Is incomplete and requires further development• Warrants immediate denial | |

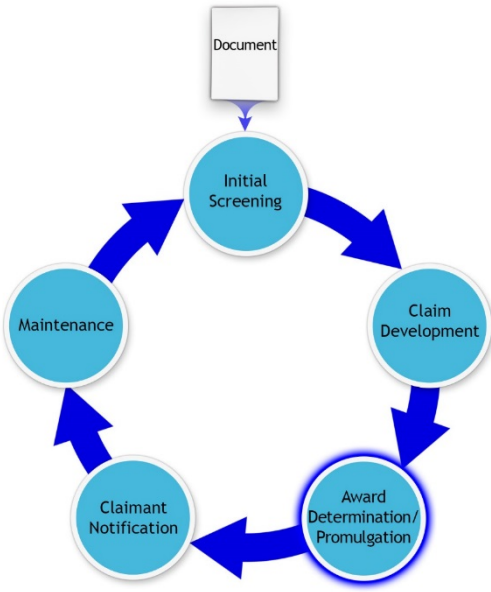
**Lesson 1: Stages of a Pension Claim
Trainee Guide**

| PowerPoint Slides | Notes |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| <p>Initial Screening (2 of 2)</p> <p>The role of PMC VSR is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the evidence considered is a valid claim or evidence in support of a valid claim. • Verify that the claim is assigned to the correct jurisdiction. • Check for pending appeals surrounding the issue. • Determine if additional evidence is required in support of the claim. | |
| <p>Claim Development (1 of 2)</p> <div> <pre> graph TD Document[Document] --> IS((Initial Screening)) IS --> CD((Claim Development)) CD --> ADP((Award Determination/Promulgation)) ADP --> CN((Claimant Notification)) CN --> M((Maintenance)) M --> IS </pre> </div> <p>Purpose: To assist claimants in obtaining evidence and/or request evidence from claimants that substantiates the claim before VA makes a decision on it.</p> | |

**Lesson 1: Stages of a Pension Claim
Trainee Guide**

| PowerPoint Slides | Notes |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <p>Claim Development (2 of 2)</p> <p>As long as the claimant provides the proper authorization to release the records to VA, the role of the PMC VSR is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make every effort to request all the evidence needed to decide a claim.• Make reasonable efforts to obtain records held by a Federal records custodian, and/or privately held records the claimant identified. | |

**Lesson 1: Stages of a Pension Claim
Trainee Guide**

| PowerPoint Slides | Notes |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| <p>Award Determination/Promulgation (1 of 2)</p>  <pre>graph TD; Document[Document] --> IS((Initial Screening)); IS --> CD((Claim Development)); CD --> ADP((Award Determination/Promulgation)); ADP --> CN((Claimant Notification)); CN --> M((Maintenance)); M --> IS;</pre> <p>Purpose: To address all issues pertaining to a single claim by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awarding benefits when entitlement exists• Denying benefits when entitlement does not exist | |

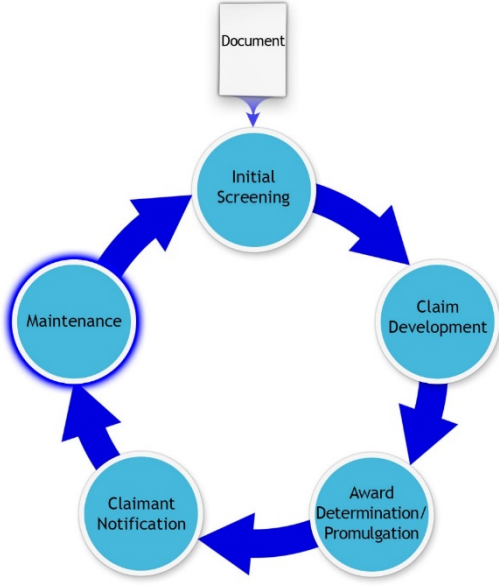
**Lesson 1: Stages of a Pension Claim
Trainee Guide**

| PowerPoint Slides | Notes |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| <p>Award Determination/Promulgation (2 of 2)</p> <p>The PMC VSR must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a thorough review of the evidence of record. • Ensure that development has been completed (if applicable). • Accurately enter the data into the claims-processing system. • Generate the award. | |
| <p>Claimant Notification (1 of 2)</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <pre> graph TD Document[Document] --> IS((Initial Screening)) IS --> CD((Claim Development)) CD --> ADP((Award Determination/Promulgation)) ADP --> CN((Claimant Notification)) CN --> M((Maintenance)) M --> IS </pre> </div> <p>Purpose: To provide the claimant with full knowledge of the decision made and their rights pertaining to that decision.</p> | |

**Lesson 1: Stages of a Pension Claim
Trainee Guide**

| PowerPoint Slides | Notes |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <p>Claimant Notification (2 of 2)</p> <p>The PMC VSR must notify the claimant of the decision the VA made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If the VA grants entitlement to a benefit, then the PMC VSR must notify the claimant of information such as the monthly rate of payment, the effective dates of entitlement and payment, and his or her appeal rights.• If the VA denies entitlement to a benefit, then the PMC VSR must provide the claimant with information such as the reason(s) for the decision, a summary of the evidence considered, and his or her appeal rights. | |

**Lesson 1: Stages of a Pension Claim
Trainee Guide**

| PowerPoint Slides | Notes |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| <p>Maintenance Claims (1 of 2)</p>  <pre>graph TD; Document[Document] --> IS((Initial Screening)); IS --> CD((Claim Development)); CD --> ADP((Award Determination/Promulgation)); ADP --> CN((Claimant Notification)); CN --> M((Maintenance)); M --> IS;</pre> <p>Purpose: To make the appropriate award adjustments following changes to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Income• Net worth• Expenses• Dependency• Hospitalization• Other issues possibly affecting entitlement | |

**Lesson 1: Stages of a Pension Claim
Trainee Guide**


| PowerPoint Slides | Notes |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| <p>Maintenance Claims (2 of 2)</p> <p>The PMC VSR must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review all correspondence to determine if the claim is substantially complete• Initiate development (if necessary)• Enter the new/amended data into the claims-processing system• Generate the award• Provide the claimant with notification of the VA's decision | |
| <p>Practice Exercise—Stages of a Pension Claim Quiz</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Instructions:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Divide into groups of two.○ Review the questions below.○ Write answers on a blank sheet of paper.○ Submit answers to the instructor.• Time allowed: 5 minutes | |

**Lesson 1: Stages of a Pension Claim
Trainee Guide**

Practice Exercise: Stages of Pension Claim Quiz

1. What are the stages of a pension claim?
 - o *Answer:*
2. What stage ensures the claimant has full knowledge of the decision made and their rights pertaining to that decision?
 - o *Answer:*
3. What stage requires all PMC VSRs to conduct a thorough review of the evidence of record, ensure that development has been completed (if applicable), accurately enter the data into the claims-processing system, and generate award?
 - o *Answer:*
4. Which stage requires all PMC VSRs to make every effort to request all the evidence needed to decide a claim?
 - o *Answer:*
5. What stage is for immediately reviewing all incoming correspondence?
 - o *Answer:*

**Lesson 1: Stages of a Pension Claim
Trainee Guide**

| PowerPoint Slides | Notes |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Lesson Summary <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stages of a pension claim• Purpose of each stage of a pension claim• Role of PMC VSR | |
| Questions?  | |
| What's Next Phase 4, Lesson 2, Types of Pension Claims and Claims Recognition | |