PENSION AND FIDUCIARY Service

PMC VSR Advanced Core Course  
Phase 6: Practical Application and Experience

Process Original Veterans Pension Claims

Trainee Guide

June 2024

Process Original Veterans Pension Claims

Lesson Overview

| Topic | Description |
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| Time Estimate: | 4.5 hours |
| Purpose of the Lesson: | This lesson is part of the entry-level curriculum, Core Pension Training for PMC VSRs. The purpose of this lesson is to train you, as a new PMC VSR, on how to process Veteran’s Pension claims through demonstration, practice, and feedback. This lesson also includes instructions on how to use the systems for processing the claims. |
| Prerequisite Training Requirements: | Prior to taking the Process Original Veterans Pension Claims lesson, you must complete the Basic Core and Intermediate Core Courses in Phases 1–5.6. |
| Target Audience: | This lesson is for entry-level PMC VSRs. |
| Lesson References: | * 38 CFR 3.1 (Definitions) * 38 CFR 3.159 (Department of Veterans Affairs Assistance in Developing Claims) * M21-1 I.i.1.A.4.b. (Refraining From or Discontinuing Assistance) * M21-1 III.i.1.A. (Establishing Veteran Status) * M21-1 IX.i.1. (Overview of Requirements and Development for Pension and Parents’ Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)) * M21-1 IX.i.2. (Original Pension Claims Development) * M21-1 II.iii.1.A.1.a. (Requirements for a Complete Claim Received on or After March 24, 2015) * M21-4. Appendix B (End Products) * **Claim Types** job aid * **Develop for Missing Information/Evidence** job aid * **Processing an Original Veterans Pension Claim Checklist** job aid * ***Appendix A* for references introduced in earlier lessons** |
| Technical Competencies: | * Program Benefits and Eligibility (PMC VSR) * Processing Claims (PMC VSR) * VBA Applications (PMC VSR) * Income Counting and Net Worth |
| Knowledge Check: | Phase 6: Process Original Veterans Pension Claims Knowledge Check |
| Lesson Objectives: | By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:   * Conduct a Veteran Pension Eligibility Review * Process Veteran pension claims (Demonstrations and Practice Exercises) * Recognize indicators of a Veterans Pension claim. * Confirm claim characteristics. * Determine if claim may be denied without development. * Determine if evidence is sufficient to process claim for Veterans Pension. * Apply the correct development actions for the information/evidence missing from claim. * Process an original claim for Veterans Pension. * Recognize indicators of a Veterans Pension claim. * Confirm claim characteristics. * Determine if claim may be denied without development. * Determine if evidence is sufficient to process claim for Veterans Pension. * Apply the correct development actions for the information/evidence missing from claim. |
| What You Need: | * Trainee Guide * **Access to the following job aids:**   + **Claim Types** job aid   + **Develop for Missing Information/Evidence** job aid   + **Processing an Original Veterans Pension Claim Checklist** job aid * ***Appendix A* Sample 527EZ Claim** * ***Appendix B Sample SSA Inquiry*** |

| PowerPoint Slides | Notes |
| --- | --- |
| Process Original Veterans Pension Claims |  |
| Transition to Phase 6  **Phase 5 Lessons**  Box with large letters PHASE 5 LESSONS. Two bullet points stating that Phase 5 lessons: Provided the fundamental claim processing rules and procedures you will perform most frequently and Are the building blocks you will integrate into the process of claim types to be learned in Phase 6. Box with large letters PHASE 6 LESSONS. Two bullet points stating that Phase 6 lessons: Provide step-by-step demonstrations and practice of the systems, decision making, and outputs for each claim type and Assume your successful completion of Phase 5, as Phase 6 lessons are cumulative and will integrate, but not duplicate, previously learned concepts.  **Phase 5 Lessons**   * Provided the fundamental claim processing rules and procedures you will perform most frequently * Are the building blocks you will integrate into the process of claim types to be learned in Phase 6   **Phase 6 Lessons**   * Provide step-by-step demonstrations and practice of the systems, decision making, and outputs for each claim type * Assume your successful completion of Phase 5, as Phase 6 lessons are cumulative and will integrate, but not duplicate, previously learned concepts |  |

| PowerPoint Slides | Notes |
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| **Lesson Objectives (1 of 3)**   * Veteran Pension Eligibility Review * Process Veteran pension claims (Demonstrations and Practice Exercises) * **Demonstrations:** Instructor will provide claim scenarios and questions for trainee review. Instructors will process production claims from start to finish with opportunities for questions. * **Guided Practice Exercises:** Trainees will process claims with questions and feedback/remediation. |  |
| **Lesson Objectives (2 of 3)**  By the end of this lesson, you should be able to   * Process an original claim for Veterans Pension. * Recognize indicators of a Veterans Pension claim. * Confirm claim characteristics. * Determine if claim may be denied without development. * Determine if evidence is sufficient to process claim for Veterans Pension. * Apply the correct development actions for the information/evidence missing from claim. |  |
| **Lesson Objectives (3 of 3)**   * Determine entitlement to Veterans Pension. * Determine if claim should be submitted to rating activity. * Decide the award action for Veterans Pension. * Determine contents of claimant notification letter for a Veterans Pension claim decision. * Create PCGL decision notification. * Submit the award to the Authorizer. |  |
| Characteristics of Veterans Pension   * Tax fee monetary benefit * For low-income Veterans * For wartime Veterans * Applications * *VA Form 21P-527EZ: Application for Pension (original claim)* * *VA Form 21P-527: Income, Asset, and Employment Statement (non-original claims)* * EP 180 (original) or 120 (non-original) |  |
| **Eligibility Determination**   * Military Service Requirement * P&T Disability or Age 65/older * Income and Net Worth Requirement * Dependent Eligibility (if applicable) * Special Monthly Pension (if applicable) |  |
| Eligibility Determination Review (1 of 3)  Military Service   * Length of Qualifying Service * Wartime Service * Character of Discharge (COD)   Income and Net Worth Information   * Veteran’s pension is an income-based benefit, the amount of the Veteran’s income for VA purposes (IVAP) determines the VA benefit rate payable. The current rate of pension is located  [VA Pension Rates For Veterans](https://www.va.gov/pension/veterans-pension-rates/)   Net worth is also a factor when determining eligibility to Veteran’s pension. The Veteran’s net worth must be below the bright line limit to qualify for pension benefits. The bright line limit information is available at [VA Pension Rates For Veterans](https://www.va.gov/pension/veterans-pension-rates/) |  |
| Eligibility Determination Review (2 of 3)  **Permanent and Total (P&T) disability**  A rating determination of P&T disability is not required to establish eligibility for Veterans Pension when a Veteran is (grant pension administratively, meaning no rating required to grant basic pension)   * age 65 or older, or * presumed to be P&T disabled for pension purposes due to being * a patient in a nursing home or * Disabled by Social Security (In receipt of Social Security disability)   If pension cannot be granted administratively (above criteria), then rating activity is required. |  |
| Eligibility Determination Review (3 of 3)  Dependent Eligibility (if applicable)  Unlike Compensation, dependency issues must be resolved up front with Pension benefits, prior to any grant of benefits. Dependent’s income and/or net worth (in most cases) is countable, just like the beneficiary’s income. |  |
| Lesson Exercise  Question 1:   * The Veteran military’s service is verified as follows: * *Branch of Service: Navy* * *EOD: 03/02/1982* * *RAD: 06/28/1989* * *COD: Honorable*   Does the Veteran qualify for Veteran pension benefits based on military service requirements?  Answer: |  |
| Lesson Exercise  Question 2:  Veteran submits VA Form 21-4138: Statement in Support of Claim, on June 24, 2021, requesting Pension benefits. ITF or RFA?  Answer: |  |
| Lesson Exercise  Question 3:  Veteran submits VA Form 21-0966: Intent to File, on June 24, 2020, requesting Pension benefits. Veteran later submits VA Form 21P-527EZ: Application for Pension on April 10, 2022. What is the Veteran’s entitlement date if pension is granted?  Answer: |  |
| Scenario 1 – Veteran Pension Claim  Solomon Veteran submits a claim for pension benefits (VA Form 21P-527EZ) on July 10, 2021. Mr. Veteran (DOB 03-02-1932), an Army Veteran, served from 05/24/1951 – 07/10/1955 KC, with honorable discharge. A review of his application shows Mr. Veteran is married to Sally and they have been married for over 50 years (married 07/22/1957, only married once to each other), and the only income received is Social Security income (Mr. Veteran: $450 monthly and Sally: $600 monthly) and interest income of $60 annually. Reported assets are $32,000 (joint checking and savings account). Mr. Veteran is not applying for special monthly pension. |  |
| **Scenario 1 -Veteran Pension Claim (Questions)**   * Does the claim meet basic eligibility criteria for Veteran pension benefits? * What is the entitlement date of Veteran pension benefit? * Is Sally an eligible dependent for VA pension purposes? |  |
| **Scenario 1 -Veteran Pension Claim (Answer)**   * Does the claim meet basic eligibility criteria for Veteran pension benefits?   + Answer: * What is the entitlement date of Veteran pension benefit?   + Answer: * Is Sally an eligible dependent for VA pension purposes?   + Answer: |  |

| PowerPoint Slides | Notes |
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| Overview of Processing an Original Veterans Pension Claim (1 of 3)   * Many of the steps required to process an original Veterans Pension claim are done simultaneously by PMC VSRs in the field. * For the purpose of instruction, the steps are broken out individually.   Circular Venn Diagram of Claim Process A circular Venn diagram illustrating how some of the steps of the claim process overlap; the center circle is labelled Processing a Claim; each outer circle is unlabeled. |  |
| Overview of Processing an Veterans Pension Claim (2 of 3)   1. Process an original claim for Veterans Pension 2. Review Application (Applicable application for Veteran benefits)  * *Confirm claim characteristics* * *End Product (EP) - EP 180* * *Date of Claim (DOC)* * *Benefit Type/ Payee Code – CPL/00* * *FDC Eligible* * *POA (if applicable)*  1. Determine entitlement to Veteran pension benefit 2. Determine if claim may be denied without development |  |
| **Overview of Processing an Veterans Pension Claim (3 of 3)**   1. Determine if evidence is sufficient to process claim for Veterans Pension 2. Apply the correct development actions for the information/evidence missing from claim 3. Determine if claim should be submitted to rating activity 4. Decide the award action for Veterans Pension 5. Create PCGL decision notification 6. Submit the award to the Authorizer |  |
| Demonstration Claim 1— Process Original Veteran Pension Claim (Grant)  Indicates you should demonstrate an action  Instructor processes an original Veteran pension claim from start to finish with opportunities for questions. Claim will be a grant of Veteran pension benefits. |  |
| Demonstration Claim 1— Process Original Veteran Pension Claim (Grant)  Indicates you should demonstrate an action  Instructor will prepare a grant decision notification letter and discuss the required information to be included in the decision letter. |  |
| **Guided Practice Exercise –  Grant (1 of 5)**  Trainees will review a sample original Veteran pension claim and answer questions related to sample case. Provide 15 minutes to review sample application and answer questions.  **Use:**   * *Appendix A - Sample 1 Original Veteran Pension Application (VA Form 21P-527EZ, Application for Pension)* * *Appendix B - Sample SSA Inquiry* |  |
| Guided Practice Exercise –  Grant (2 of 5)  Review Sample 1 Original Veteran Pension Application Form  Brief Description   * Original Veteran Application received on February 27, 2022 * Vietnam Veteran (military service verified) * Not claiming SMP * No dependents * Reported Income/expenses on application * *Social Security - $400 monthly* * *SMIB - $140 monthly* * Properly signed |  |
| **Guided Practice Exercise – Grant (3 of 5)**  **Questions**   1. What is the correct EP for the original Veteran pension claim? 2. Does the Veteran meet basic eligibility criteria? 3. Should the claim be routed for rating review? 4. Is the Veteran entitled to pension benefits? If so, what is the effective date to grant pension? 5. What income and medical expenses are counted? |  |
| Guided Practice Exercise – Grant (4 of 5)  **Answers**   1. What is the correct EP for the original Veteran pension claim?  * *Answer:*  1. Does the Veteran meet basic eligibility criteria?  * *Answer:*  1. Should the claim be routed for rating review?  * *Answer:* |  |
| Guided Practice Exercise –  Grant (5 of 5)  Answers   1. Is the Veteran entitled to pension benefits? If so, what is the effective date to grant pension?  * *Answer:*  1. What income and medical expenses are counted?  * *Answer:* |  |
| Guided Practice Exercise –  Original Veteran Pension Decision Letter  Trainees will prepare an original Veteran pension grant decision letter for Sample 1 Original Veteran Pension claim  Instructions:   * Use the job aids, references, and systems available. * Be prepared to discuss letter with the class.   Time allowed: 20 minutes |  |
| Eligibility vs Entitlement What’s the Difference?  It is the responsibility of the claims processor to develop for evidence needed to establish ***entitlement*** to pension.  If a claim does not meet basic ***eligibility*** requirements, deny the claim.  Do not develop or route for rating review.  **Eligibility** means basic requirements to pay benefits (Veteran status, qualifying service, reported income and net worth, relationship status, etc.)  **Entitlement** means basic requirements are met, benefit payable. |  |
| Refraining From or Discontinuing  Assistance (Denial without Development)  Circumstances in which VA will refrain from or discontinue providing assistance in obtaining evidence include, but are not limited to   * Lack of qualifying service, Veteran status or other lack of legal eligibility * Claims that are inherently incredible or clearly lack merit, and * Request for a benefit to which the claimant is not entitled as a matter of law. |  |
| Lesson Exercise  Review the following scenarios and determine if claim lacks eligibility or entitlement. The Veteran submits VA Form 21P-527: Application for Pension, along with the following:  Scenario 1   * Army Veteran (DOB 03-22-1932): served from May 25, 1977 – May 13, 1982, with honorable discharge, has no income, net worth is $500, no dependents. * *Answer:* |  |
| Lesson Exercise  **Scenario 2**   * Navy Veteran (DOB 01-24-31): served from June 2, 1950 – July 23, 1950, with honorable discharge, receiving 30% SC compensation, reported income SS $2,500 monthly, VA Compensation (30% rate payable), private pension $2,125 monthly, assets are $55,000 (checking account), no dependents. * *Answer:* |  |
| Lesson Exercise  Scenario 3   * Marine Veteran (DOB 01-24-58): served from June 2, 1978 – July 2, 1988, with under honorable discharge, reported income salary of $82,000 annually, assets are $12,000 (checking account), no dependents. * *Answer:* |  |
| **Scenario 2 – Veteran Pension Claim, Development Needed**  Sandra Veteran, submits a claim for pension benefits (VA Form 21P- 527EZ) on January 15, 2022. Sandra (DOB: 07-12-32) has qualifying wartime service. Sandra also has a spouse and reports the following income: social security of $850 monthly, spouse receives $300 monthly social security and $300 monthly from a private pension. Reported interest income of $30 annually and assets are $34,000 combined. Their medical expenses are Medicare Part B premiums of $170.10 each (monthly), private medical insurance (BCBS) of $195 each (monthly) and the Veteran’s assisted living fees of $3,000 monthly. The Veteran reported this is their 3rd marriage, they were both married twice before but did not report prior marital history. Veteran is claiming aid and attendance, submitted VA Form 21-2680. |  |
| Scenario 2 – Veteran Pension Claim (Questions)   * Does the claim meet basic eligibility criteria for Veteran pension benefits? * Can the claim be processed based on the information submitted? Why or Why not? * Does the Veteran meet liberalized legislation criteria if benefits are payable? |  |
| Scenario 2 – Veteran Pension Claim (Answers)   * Does the claim meet basic eligibility criteria for Veteran pension benefits? * *Answer:* * Can the claim be processed based on the information submitted? Why or Why not? * *Answer:* * Does the Veteran meet liberalized legislation criteria if benefits are payable? * *Answer:* |  |
| Basic Pension Eligibility (P&T)  Generally, if a Veteran meets at least one of the following:   * Age 65 or older * Presumed to be P&T disabled because… * Patient in a nursing home (or medical foster home) * In receipt of Social Security disability   Pension can be granted administratively (no rating required) |  |
| Rating Review  If Pension cannot be granted administratively, must be done by Rating.   * Medical evidence is adequate for pension rating purposes if it addresses all medical or mental conditions provided by the Veteran and can be used to evaluate the impact of each condition on the Veteran’s employability. * If Veteran is claiming special monthly pension (SMP), rating is required (exception: can grant aid and attendance administratively, if applicable)   Note: Do not send claim for rating review if development is required or if eligibility/entitlement is not met. All development actions must be completed prior to rating review. |  |
| Demonstration Claim 2— Process Original Veteran Pension Claim  (Rating Review Needed)  Indicates you should demonstrate an action  Instructor processes an original Veteran pension claim from start to finish with opportunities for questions. Claim will require rating review prior to processing the claim for pension benefits. |  |
| Demonstration Claim 2— Process Original Veteran Pension Claim (Rating Review Needed)  Indicates you should demonstrate an action  Instructor will prepare a decision notification letter (to include rating decision) based on the rating decision completed (grant or denial) and discuss the required information to be included in the decision letter. |  |
| Lesson Review Exercise  Review the following scenarios and determine if claim can be granted, denied, development, or rating is required. All scenarios, VA Form 21P-527EZ, Application for Pension was submitted.  **Scenario 1**   * Navy Veteran (DOB: 01-25-90), served from 05/12/2009 – 06/13/2013, honorable discharge, has no reported income or net worth, has 1 established dependent child (DOB: 07-22-2019, no income). Submitted medical evidence. * *Answer:* |  |
| Lesson Review Exercise  **Scenario 2**   * Army Veteran (DOB: 08-25-31), served from 05/12/1950 – 12/13/1954, honorable discharge, 1 established dependent spouse, reported social security income of $1,600 monthly, private pension of $325 monthly, spouse social security income of $2,189 monthly, net worth is $45,000, medical expenses: SMIB $170.10 each monthly, PMI (BCBS) $127.00 each monthly. Not claiming SMP. * *Answer:* |  |
| Lesson Review Exercise  **Scenario 3**   * Army Veteran (DOB: 010-12-42), served from 09/12/1964 – 12/19/1968, under honorable discharge, no dependent, only income is social security of $679 monthly, net worth is $500 no medical expenses. Claiming aid and attendance (submitted VA Form 21-2680). * *Answer:* |  |
| **Knowledge Check – Lesson Summary Review**    **Time allowed: 10 minutes** |  |
| What’s Next   * Complete the Process Original Veterans Pension Claims course evaluation: TMS ID #4408386 |  |