Pension and Fiduciary Service

PMC VSR Intermediate Core Course   
Phase 5: Proficiency Development Part 1: Beyond Basic Eligibility

Overview of Ready to Rate

Trainee Guide

June 2024

Overview of Ready to Rate

Lesson Overview

| Topic | Description |
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| Time Estimate: | 1 hour |
| Purpose of the Lesson: | This lesson is part of the entry-level curriculum, Core Course for PMC VSRs. The purpose of this lesson is to introduce you to types of claims that require rating decisions. You will learn to identify claims that require a rating decision and the required evidence that is necessary to determine whether a claim is ready to rate. |
| Prerequisite Training Requirements: | Prior to taking the Overview of Ready to Rate lesson, you must complete PMC VSR Course Phases 1–4 and Phase 5, Part 1.a-c. |
| Target Audience: | This lesson is for entry-level PMC VSRs. |
| Lesson References: | * 38 USC 1151 (Benefits for persons disabled by treatment or vocational rehabilitation * 38 CFR 3.211 (Death) * 38 CFR 3.351 (Special Monthly Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, Death Compensation, Pension and Spouse’s Compensation Ratings) * 38 CFR 3.353 (Determinations of incompetency and competency) * M21-1, III.ii.1.A.2.d. (Means for Obtaining VA Medical Records) * M21-1, V.i.1.A (General Information on the Rating Activity) * M21-1, V.i.1.A.1.b. (Specific Issues Requiring a Rating Decision) * M21-1, V.i.1.B (Referrals to the Rating Activity) * M21-1, V.ii.2.B (Presumptive Service Connection (SC) * M21-1, V.iv.1.A (Completing the Rating Decision Narrative) * M21-1, VI.i.1.B.1 (Notification Requirements) * M21-1, IX.i.2.2.a. (When a Rating Determination of P&T Disability is Not Required) * M21-1, IX.i.2.5 (Referring Pension Claims to the Rating Activity) * M21-1, IX.ii.1.A.1.f. (Applicable Regulatory References for Certain A&A Status Issues) * M21-1, IX.ii.2.C (Special Monthly Pension (SMP) Ratings) * M21-1, IX.ii.2.C.1.b. (Medical Evidence Used for A&A Ratings) * M21-1, IX.ii.2.C.1.g. (When No Rating Decision is Required to Grant A&A * M21-1, IX.i.2.2.e. (When a Rating Determination of P&T Disability is Required) * M21-1, X.i.2.B.2 (Excluding Claims from the FDC Program) * M21-1, X.ii.6.A (Evaluating and Rating Competency) * M21-1, X.ii.6.B.1 (General Information on a Child’s Permanent Incapacity for Self-Support) * M21-1, XI.ii.3.D (Rating Accrued Claims) * M21-1, XII.i.1.B (Common Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) Processing Issues * M21-1, XII.i.2.A (Ratings for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation DIC) * M21-1, XII.i.2.B.1.b. (Evidence on Which to Base A&A and Housebound Determinations) * M21-1, XII.i.2.B.1.c. (When a Rating Decision is Required) * M21-1, XII.i.2.B.2.c. (Authorizing A&A Without a Rating Decision) * **Ready to Rate** job aid |
| Technical Competencies: | * Program Benefits and Eligibility (PMC VSR) * Processing Claims (PMC VSR) * Special Monthly Pension (SMP) Processes * VBA Applications (PMC VSR) |
| Lesson Objectives: | By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:   * Explain why a claim requires a rating decision * Identify the types of claims that require a rating decision * List the required elements for a claim that is ready to rate |
| Knowledge Check: | Phase 5.1(d): Overview of Ready to Rate Knowledge Check |
| What You Need: | * Trainee Guide * Access to CPKM to display the references * Access to the **Ready to Rate** job aid from VSR Assistant |

| PowerPoint Slides | Notes |
| --- | --- |
| **Overview of Ready to Rate** |  |
| **Lesson Objectives**  **By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:**   * Explain why a claim requires a rating decision * Identify the types of claims that require a rating decision * List the required elements for a claim that is ready to rate |  |
| **Why It Matters!**   * **Prevents delay in claims processing** * A claim that is ready to rate allows the RVSR to make determination for benefit entitlement |  |
| ****The Purpose of a Rating Decision****   * The rating decision is needed to determine whether a claimant is entitled to benefits for the issues under review based on the evidence of record * The rating decision provides:   + A formal determination regarding one or more issues of benefit entitlement   + Statement of the decision(s), and   + An explanation supporting each decision * These decisions are made by Rating Veteran Service Representatives (RVSRs) |  |
| ****When Is a Claim Ready to Rate?****   * A claim is ready to rate when:   + All necessary evidence is of record and is adequate for rating purposes; or   + All development actions (to the claimant, private providers, and Federal records custodians), have been completed     - Including VA examinations |  |
| ****When Is a Rating Decision Required?****   * A rating decision is required when determination of entitlement is dependent on medical evidence and/or establishing service-connection for the cause of death.   NOTE: See Table 1: Basic Ready to Rate Requirements within the Ready to Rate job aid and Table 2: Specific Ready to Rate Requirements within the Ready to Rate job aid |  |
| ****Check Your Knowledge Learning Quiz****   * Instructions:   + Divide into groups of three.   + Each group is to appoint one member as the representative of their group.   + Each group is to answer one of the three questions assigned by the instructor.   + Do not refer to your trainee guide to determine the answers.   + The representative will present the answer to the class. * Time: 10–15 minutes |  |
| ****Check Your Knowledge Learning Quiz: Questions****   * **Question 1: Why is determining whether a claim is ready to rate important?** * **Question 2: What is the purpose of a rating decision?** * **Question 3: When is a claim ready to rate?** |  |
| ****Check Your Knowledge Learning Quiz: Answers (1 of 3)****  **Question 1: Why is determining whether a claim is ready to rate important?** |  |
| ****Check Your Knowledge Learning Quiz: Answers (2 of 3)****  **Question 2: What is the purpose of a rating decision?** |  |
| ****Check Your Knowledge Learning Quiz: Answers (3 of 3)****  **Question 3: When is a claim ready to rate?** |  |
| **Pension Claim Requiring a Rating Decision**   * Special Monthly Pension (SMP) * Service-connected death for DIC * Service-connected death for burial benefits * Permanent and total disability * DIC based on 38 USC 1151 or 38 USC 1318 * Competency or Incompetency * Permanent incapacity for self-support (helpless child) * Accrued   \*This list is not all inclusive |  |
| **Scenario 1— When a Rating Decision Is Required**  Scenario:  60-year-old Joseph Veteran submits an original application for pension including VA Form 21P-527EZ (Application for Pension); VA Form 21-2680 (Examination for Housebound Status or Permanent Need for Regular Aid and Attendance); and a certified military discharge document verifying honorable wartime service. The Veteran has no income (e.g., no Social Security disability) or net worth and is requesting the maximum benefit with Special Monthly Pension (SMP). |  |
| **Scenario 2 — When a Rating Decision Is NOT Required**  Scenario:  58-year-old, Aaron Veteran submitted VA Form 21P-527EZ (Application for Pension) and VA Form 21- 0779 (Request for Nursing Home Information in Connection with Claim for Aid and Attendance). Our records indicate that the Veteran served honorably in the Vietnam War and is currently a patient in a nursing home for long-term care. He is within the income limit and has minimal net worth. |  |
| Ready to Rate Scenario Practice Exercise   * Instructions:   + Work independently.   + Complete the Ready to Rate Scenario Worksheet provided.   + Be prepared to discuss your answers and rationale with the class. * Time: 10 minutes |  |

| PowerPoint Slides | Notes |
| --- | --- |
| **Ready to Rate Practice Exercise Answer for Scenario #1**   1. What type of claim did Jackie Clause submit? 2. Does the claim require a rating decision? 3. If claim requires a rating decision, what evidence is required for the claim to be ready to rate?   **BONUS QUESTION:** Is any evidence missing? If so, list the missing evidence. |  |
| **Ready to Rate Practice Exercise Answer for Scenario #2**   1. What type of claim did Rebecca Survivor submit? 2. Does it require a rating decision? 3. If claim requires a rating decision, what evidence is required for the claim to be ready to rate? |  |
| **Ready to Rate Practice Exercise Answer for Scenario #2**  **BONUS QUESTION:** Is any evidence missing? If so, list the missing evidence. |  |
| **Knowledge Check: Lesson Summary Review**    **Time Allowed: 10 minutes** |  |
| **What’s Next?**   * **Complete** TMS Evaluation Overview of Ready to Rate using **(TMS# 4408456)** |  |

Ready to Rate Scenario Worksheet

**SCENARIO 1:**

On February 25, 2021, the claims intake center received VA Form 21P-530 (Application for Burial Benefits) from Jackie, the surviving spouse of Vietnam War Veteran Jim. Jackie claimed service-connected burial benefits and verified that she incurred the Veteran’s burial expenses. Jackie submitted supporting documents including a death certificate with the cause of death pending and proof of the Veteran’s burial expenses from the funeral home. In review of the claim, the PMC VSR was able to verify that the Veteran was in receipt of 60% service-connected benefits for diabetes mellitus.

1. What type of claim did Jackie submit?
2. Does it require a rating decision?
3. What evidence is required for the claim to be ready to rate?

**BONUS QUESTION:** Is any evidence missing? If so, list the missing evidence.

**SCENARIO 2:**

Rebecca Survivor, the 27-year-old surviving child of Andrew Veteran, submits a VA Form 21-534EZ (Application for DIC, Death Pension, and/or Accrued Benefits) to apply for survivor pension benefits. Mr. Veteran did not have a running award before his death and there is no living surviving spouse or indication of a previous surviving spouse award. Based on the evidence within VBMS, Rebecca indicates that she is a helpless child on her application. Along with her application, Rebecca submits a signed statement from her social worker that includes the social worker’s name and signature. The social worker states that he does not believe that the child is capable of self-support.

1. What type of claim did Rebecca Survivor submit?
2. Does the claim require a rating decision?
3. If claim requires a rating decision, what evidence is required for the claim to be ready to rate?

**BONUS QUESTION:** Is any evidence missing? If so, list the missing evidence.