Pension and fiduciary service

PMC VSR Intermediate Core Course

Phase 5: Proficiency Development  
Part 3: Promulgation

Overview of the Award Process

Trainee Guide

June 2024

Overview of the Award Process

Lesson Overview

| Topic | Description |
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| Time Estimate: | 2 hours |
| 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 prepare PMC VSRs to process an award action. |
| Prerequisite Training Requirements: | Prior to taking the Overview of the Award Process lesson, trainees must complete PMC VSR Core Course Phases 1–5.2. |
| Target Audience: | This lesson is for entry-level PMC VSRs. |
| Lesson References: | * Compensation and Pension Knowledge Management (CPKM) * 38 CFR 3.106 (Renouncement) * M21-1 VI.i.1.A. (Decision Authorization)   + M21-1 VI.i.1.A.1.a. (Final Stage in Adjudicating a Claim)   + M21-1 VI.i.1.A.1.b. (Responsibility for Awarding or Denying Benefits)   + M21-1 VI.i.1.A.2. (General Information on Processing Decisions)   + M21-1 VI.i.1.A.2.c. (Award Processing Responsibilities)   + M21-1 VI.i.1.A.3. (General Information on Denials)   + M21-1 VI.i.1.A.3.a. (Definition: Denial)   + M21-1 VI.i.1.A.2.d. (Circumstances Under Which a VSR May Authorize His/Her Own Award Action)   + M21-1 VI.i.1.A.4. (Denials Based on a Claimant’s Failure to Furnish Requested Evidence) * M21-1 VI.i.1.B. (Decision Notices)   + M21-1 VI.i.1.B.1.b. (Decision Notice Requirements) * M21-1 X.iv.4. (Renouncements)   + M21-1 X.iv.4.1. (General Information About Renouncement)   + M21-1 X.iv.4.1.b. (Acceptable Means of Renouncing the Right to a Benefit)   + M21-1 X.iv.4.3.c. (System Entries for Discontinuing an Award)   + M21-1 X.iv.4.3.d. (Notification of Renouncement of the Right to Pension or Parents DIC)   + M21-1 X.iv.4.3.e. (Notification of Renouncement of the Right to Benefits Other Than Pension or Parents DIC) * **Annotate the Award** job aid * **Processing an Award Adjustment** job aid * **Processing an Award Renouncement** job aid * **Processing a Denial of Benefits** job aid * **Processing a Grant of Benefits** job aid |
| Technical Competencies: | * Processing Claims (PMC VSR) * Special Monthly Pension (SMP) Processing * VBA Applications (PMC VSR) |
| Knowledge Check: | Phase 5.3 Overview of the Award Process Knowledge Check |
| Lesson Objectives: | By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:   * Describe how to prepare an award action * Describe the responsibilities on award action for all decisions * Describe the common steps for processing a grant of benefits * Describe the common steps for processing a denial of benefits * Describe the common steps for processing an award adjustment * Describe the common steps for processing a renouncement |
| What You Need: | * Trainee Guide * Access to CPKM * Access to the following job aids from VSR Assistant:   + **Processing a Grant of Benefits** job aid   + **Processing a Denial of Benefits** job aid   + **Processing an Award Adjustment** job aid   + **Processing an Award Renouncement** job aid   + **Annotate the Award** job aid   + **Appendix A – Overview of the Award Process** |

| PowerPoint Slides | Notes | |
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| Overview of the Award Process |  | |
| Lesson Objectives  By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:   * Describe how to prepare an award action * Describe the responsibilities on award action for all decisions * Describe the common steps for processing a grant of benefits * Describe the common steps for processing a denial of benefits * Describe the common steps for processing an award adjustment * Describe the common steps for processing a renouncement |  | |
| Why It Matters!  **Overview of the Award Process** is important because the authorization activity is responsible for ensuring VA makes a decision to award or deny entitlement to benefits for each issue a claimant raises. The authorization activity must address all issues based on eligibility criteria and the rating decision and inform the claimant of the decision on each issue. |  | |
| Award Actions  Processing an award action includes granting, denying, or adjusting benefits for the following claims:   * Veterans pension * Survivors pension * Survivors DIC * Parents DIC * Accrued * Burial |  |
| Processing an Award  Processing Award Actions with four banners labeled: Grant Benefits, Deny Benefits, Award Adjustment, and Award Renouncement |  |
| Common Steps for Granting Benefits  Common Steps for Granting Benefits, with the following seven steps: step 1 Decide the award action; step 2 Verify the Information in VBMS-A; Step 3 Enter Additional Information in VBMS-A; Step 4 Generate award in VBMS-A; Step 5 Annotate the Award; step 6 Prepare the Decision Notice ; and step 7 Submit to Authorizer. |  |
| Granting Benefits—Generate Award in VBMS-A   * Conduct a cursory review of the rating decision, to include the code sheet, in an attempt to identify any obvious errors, such as failure to consider entitlement to [**Chapter 35**](https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/38/part-III/chapter-35) benefits when a total disability rating is granted and no future examination is required * Access the RATING screen in the Veterans Benefits Management System – Awards (VBMS-A) to validate data contained in the rating decision and notify the rating activity if any inconsistencies exist * Enter additional data pertaining to the decision into the claims-processing system, as applicable * Generate an award |  |
| Granting Benefits—Annotate the Award   * Ensure, as applicable, that the award document fully reflects *all* new and/or increased entitlements implemented by the associated rating decision and/or authorization determination(s)   Common Steps for Granting Benefits, with the following seven steps: step 1 Decide the award action; step 2 Verify the Information in VBMS-A; Step 3 Enter Additional Information in VBMS-A; Step 4 Generate award in VBMS-A; Step 5 Annotate the Award; step 6 Prepare the Decision Notice ; and step 7 Submit to Authorizer. Step 5 is highlighted. |  |
| Granting Benefits—Prepare the Decision Notice   * Prepare a decision notice for the claimant * ***For pension and Parents' DIC cases only***, VSRs must ensure documentation of calculations made to determine the rate of benefits (such as calculations of medical expenses, net worth, and waived overpayments) are included in the electronic claims folder * Route the award to a Senior VSR (SVSR)   Common Steps for Granting Benefits, with the following seven steps: step 1 Decide the award action; step 2 Verify the Information in VBMS-A; Step 3 Enter Additional Information in VBMS-A; Step 4 Generate award in VBMS-A; Step 5 Annotate the Award; step 6 Prepare the Decision Notice ; and step 7 Submit to Authorizer. Step 7 is highlighted. |  |
| Practice Exercise—Granting Benefits   * Instructions:   + Divide into groups of three.   + Complete Appendix A: Part A—Granting Benefits worksheet.   + Use the **Processing a Grant of Benefits** job aid.   + Be prepared to share your finished activity with other groups. * Time allowed: 7-10 minutes |  | |
| Practice Exercise—Granting Benefits Answers   1. What decision would you use for granting this award? 2. What award type would this decision be processed under in VBMS-A? 3. You have successfully entered all the information into VBMS-A. What is your next step in granting benefits? |  |
| Denying Benefits  Processing an Award Action with four banners labeled: Grant Benefits, Deny Benefits, Award Adjustment, and Award Renouncement. Denying Benefits is highlighted. |  |
| Common Steps for Denying Benefits  Common Steps for Denying Benefits with the following six steps: step 1 Decide the award action; step 2 Select denial decision in VBMS-A; step 3 Generate award in VBMS-A; step 4 Annotate the Award; step 5 Prepare the Decision Notice ; and step 6 Submit to Authorizer. |  |
| Practice Exercise—Denying Benefits   * Instructions:   + Divide into groups of three.   + Complete Appendix A: Part B—Denying Benefits worksheet.   + Use the **Processing a Denial of Benefits job aid.**   + Be prepared to share your finished activity with other groups. * Time allowed: 10 minutes |  | |
| Practice Exercise—Denying Benefits Answers   1. What decision would you use for denying this award? 2. What denial decision would be selected in the VBMS-A? 3. What is the final step of the denial process? |  |
| Award Adjustment  Processing an Award Action with four banners labeled: Grant Benefits, Deny Benefits, Award Adjustment, and Award Renouncement. Award Adjustment is highlighted. |  |
| Common Steps for Award Adjustment  Common Steps for Award Adjustment with the following seven steps: step 1 Decide the award action; step 2 Perform calculation (if required); step 3 Enter updated information in VBMS-A; step 4 Generate award in VBMS-A; step 5 Annotate the award; step 6 Prepare the decision notice ; and step 7 Submit to Authorizer. |  |
| Practice Exercise—Award Adjustment   * Instructions:   + Divide into groups of three.   + Complete Appendix A: Part C—Award Adjustment worksheet.   + Use the **Processing an Award Adjustment** job aid.   + Be prepared to share your finished activity with other groups. * Time allowed: 10-15 minutes |  | |
| Practice Exercise—Award Adjustment Answers   1. What decision would you use for processing this award adjustment? 2. What information would be updated in the VBMS-A? 3. After you have updated in the VBMS-A, what is the next step in the award adjustment process? |  |
| Award Renouncement  Processing an Award Action with four banners labeled: Grant Benefits, Deny Benefits, Award Adjustment, and Award Renouncement. Award Renouncement is highlighted. |  |
| Common Steps for Award Renouncement  Common Steps for Award Renouncement with the following five steps: step 1 Decide the award action; step 2 Discontinue award in VBMS-A; step 3 Generate award in VBMS-A; step 4 Prepare the decision notice; and step 5 Submit to Authorizer. |  |
| Practice Exercise—Award Renouncement   * Instructions:   + Divide into groups of three.   + Complete Appendix A: Part D—Award Renouncement worksheet.   + Use M21-1 X.iv.4. (Renouncements).   + Be prepared to share your finished activity with other groups. * Time allowed: 5-7 minutes |  | |
| Practice Exercise—Award Renouncement Answers  **Scenario 1:**  **Scenario 2:** |  |
| Practice Exercise—Award Process   * Instructions:   + Divide into groups of three.   + Complete Appendix A: Part E—Award Process Worksheet.   + Use the job aid listed in Part E.   + Be prepared to share your finished activity with other groups. * Time allowed: 15-20 minutes |  |
| Practice Exercise—Award Process Questions (1 of 2)   1. Based on this scenario, are there multiple issues for this claim? If so, what are the issues? 2. If Mr. Curtis was granted benefits, what would be the first step in the award process? |  |
| Practice Exercise—Award Process Questions (2 of 2)   1. You have started the award process and you need to enter a decision for the dependent. Based on the scenario, what information should be entered in VBMS-A? 2. After you have prepared a decision notice for Mr. Curtis, what is the final step you need to take in the award process? |  |
| Knowledge Check: Lesson Summary Review    Time Allowed: 15 minutes |  |
| **What’s Next**   * Complete TMS Evaluation Confirm Accuracy of Rating Decision using (TMS# 4408480) |  |