



## PENSION AND FIDUCIARY SERVICE

PMC VSR Advanced Core Course  
Phase 5: Stages of a Claim  
Part 3: Promulgate Non-Rating or  
Rating Decision

# **Lesson 2: Overview of the Award Process**

Trainee Guide

July 11, 2017

Version 1.0

**Lesson 2: Overview of the Award Process**  
**Trainee Guide**

**Overview of the Award Process**

**Lesson Overview**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Description</b>
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 1–4, Phase 5 Parts 1 and 2, and Phase 5 Part 3 Lesson 1. (Refer to the <b>Master Course Map</b> learning aid for a list of lessons.)
Target Audience:	This lesson is for entry-level PMC VSRs.

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Topic	Description
Lesson References:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Master Course Map</b> learning aid</li> <li>• Compensation and Pension Knowledge Management (CPKM)</li> <li>• M21-1 III.V.2.A (Decision Authorization)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ M21-1 III.v.2.A.1.a (Final Stage in Adjudicating a Claim)</li> <li>○ M21-1 III.v.2.A.1.b (Responsibility for Awarding or Denying Benefits)</li> <li>○ M21-1 III.v.2.A.2 (General Information on Processing Decisions)</li> <li>○ M21-1 III.v.2.A.2.c (Award Processing Responsibilities)</li> <li>○ M21-1 III.v.2.A.3 (General Information on Denials)</li> <li>○ M21-1 III.v.2.A.3.a (Definition: Denial)</li> <li>○ M21-1 III.v.2.A.3.b. (Authority of VSRs to Make Entitlement Decisions and Deny Benefits)</li> <li>○ M21-1 III.v.2.A.4 (Denials Based on a Claimant’s Failure to Furnish Requested Evidence)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• M21-1 III.v.2.B (Decision Notices)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ M21-1 III.v.2.B.1.b. (Decision Notice Requirements)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• M21-1 III.ii.2.H (Renouncements)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ M21-1 III.ii.2.H.1 (General Information About Renouncement)</li> <li>○ M21-1 III.ii.2.H.1.b. (Acceptable Means of Renouncing the Right to a Benefit)</li> <li>○ M21-1 III.ii.2.H.3.c (System Entries for Discontinuing an Award)</li> <li>○ M21-1 III.ii.2.H.3.d (Notification of Renouncement of the Right to Pension or Parents DIC)</li> <li>○ M21-1 III.ii.2.H.3.e (Notification of Renouncement of the Right to Benefits Other Than Pension or Parents DIC)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 38 CFR 3.106 (Renouncement)</li> <li>• <b>Annotate the Award</b> job aid</li> <li>• <b>Processing an Award Adjustment</b> job aid</li> </ul>
July 11, 2017 Version 1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Processing an Award Renouncement</b> job aid</li> <li>• <b>Processing a Denial of Benefits</b> job aid</li> </ul>

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Topic	Description
Technical Competencies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Processing Claims (PMC VSR)</li> <li>• Special Monthly Pension (SMP) Processing</li> <li>• VBA Applications (PMC VSR)</li> </ul>
Knowledge Check:	Phase 5: Stages of a Claim, Part 3: Promulgate Non-Rating or Rating Decision Knowledge Check
Lesson Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe how to prepare an award action.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Describe the responsibilities on award action for all decisions.</li> <li>○ Describe the common steps for processing a grant of benefits.</li> <li>○ Describe the common steps for processing a denial of benefits.</li> <li>○ Describe the common steps for processing an award adjustment.</li> <li>○ Describe the common steps for processing a renouncement.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
What You Need:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trainee Guide</li> <li>• <b>Master Course Map</b> learning aid</li> <li>• Access to CPKM</li> <li>• Access to the following job aids from VSR Assistant:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Processing a Grant of Benefits</b> job aid</li> <li>○ <b>Processing a Denial of Benefits</b> job aid</li> <li>○ <b>Processing an Award Adjustment</b> job aid</li> <li>○ <b>Processing an Award Renouncement</b> job aid</li> <li>○ <b>Annotate the Award</b> job aid</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<b>PowerPoint Slides</b>	<b>Notes</b>
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PowerPoint Slides	Notes
<p><b>Lesson 2: Overview of the Award Process</b></p>	
<p><b>You Are Here</b></p>	
<p><b>Why It Matters!</b></p> <p>Promulgating Non-Rating or Rating Decision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirm Accuracy of Rating Decision</li> <li>• <b>Overview of the Award Process</b></li> </ul>	
<p><b>Technical Competencies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Processing Claims (PMC VSR)</li> <li>• Special Monthly Processing (SMP) Processing</li> <li>• VBA Applications (PMC VSR)</li> </ul>	

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PowerPoint Slides	Notes
<p><b>Lesson Objectives</b></p> <p>Describe how to prepare an award action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the responsibilities on award action for all decisions.</li> <li>• Describe the common steps for processing a grant of benefits.</li> <li>• Describe the common steps for processing a denial of benefits.</li> <li>• Describe the common steps for processing an award adjustment.</li> <li>• Describe the common steps for processing a renouncement.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Knowledge Check</b></p> <pre> graph TD     P1[PHASE 5 PART 1 Determine Eligibility] --&gt; P2[PHASE 5 PART 2 Process a Claim]     P2 --&gt; K2{Phase 5 Part 2 Knowledge Check}     P2 --&gt; P3[PHASE 5 PART 3 Promulgate Non-Rating or Rating Decision]     P3 --&gt; K3{Phase 5 Part 3 Knowledge Check}     P3 --&gt; P4[PHASE 5 PART 4 Prepare Decision Notice]     P4 --&gt; K4{Phase 5 Part 4 Knowledge Check}     P4 --&gt; P5[PHASE 5 PART 5 Award Adjustments]     P5 --&gt; K5a{Phase 5 Part 5a Knowledge Check}     P5 --&gt; K5b{Phase 5 Part 5b Knowledge Check}     </pre> <p>The flowchart illustrates the five parts of Phase 5: Determine Eligibility, Process a Claim, Promulgate Non-Rating or Rating Decision, Prepare Decision Notice, and Award Adjustments. Each part is followed by a corresponding knowledge check. The 'Award Adjustments' step is further divided into two sub-checks: 5a and 5b.</p>	

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PowerPoint Slides	Notes
<p><b>Award Actions</b></p> <p>Processing an award action includes granting, denying, or adjusting benefits for the following claims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Veterans pension</li><li>• Survivors pension</li><li>• Survivors DIC</li><li>• Parents DIC</li><li>• Accrued</li><li>• Burial</li></ul>	

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PowerPoint Slides	Notes
<p><b>Decisions on a Claim</b></p> <p><b>Scenario:</b> On November 5, 2016 VA received VA Form 21-534EZ, Application for DIC, Death Pension, and/or Accrued Benefits from Marie Smith, a surviving spouse. The Veteran's date of death is October 31, 2015. The Veteran served as a combat medic in the Vietnam era from 1965-1973. He was not in receipt of benefits. Mrs. Smith reported that her only income is \$675.90 from Social Security, that she has \$1,000 in non-interest bearing assets. Her reported expenses are \$104.90 per month for Medicare Part B and \$1,000 per month for In-Home Care (IHC) provided by the claimant's niece. Mrs. Smith also submitted a Care Expense Statement confirming her IHC expenses and a VA Form 21-2680, Examination for Housebound Status or Permanent Need for Regular Aid and Attendance, signed by a doctor.</p> <p><b>How many issues need decisions to be made for this claim?</b></p>	
<p><b>Decisions on a Claim Answer</b></p> <p>How many issues need decisions to be made for this claim?</p>	
<p><b>Multiple Decisions Demo</b></p> 	






## Lesson 2: Overview of the Award Process Trainee Guide

PowerPoint Slides	Notes
<p><b>Processing an Award</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Processing Award Actions</p> 	
<p><b>Grant Benefits</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Processing an Award Action</p> 	
<p><b>Common Steps for Granting Benefits</b></p> 	





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PowerPoint Slides	Notes
<p><b>Granting Benefits—Decide the Award Action</b></p> 	
<p><b>Granting Benefits—Verify the Information in VBMS-A</b></p> 	


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PowerPoint Slides	Notes
<p><b>Granting Benefits—Enter Additional Information in VBMS-A</b></p> 	
<p><b>Granting Benefits—Generate Award in VBMS-A</b></p> 	
<p><b>Generate Award in VBMS-A Demo</b></p> 	

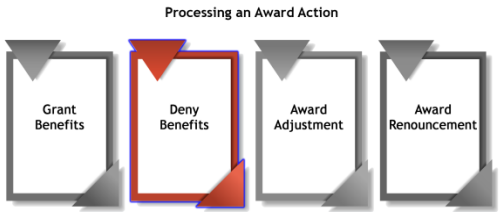

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PowerPoint Slides	Notes
<p><b>Granting Benefits—Annotate the Award</b></p> 	
<p><b>Annotate the Award in VBMS-A Demo</b></p> 	
<p><b>Granting Benefits—Prepare the Decision Notice</b></p> 	
<p><b>Decision Notice—Grant Demo</b></p> 	

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PowerPoint Slides	Notes
<p><b>Granting Benefits—Submit to the Authorizer</b></p> 	
<p><b>Practice Exercise—Granting Benefits</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Instructions:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Divide into groups of three.</li><li>○ Complete Appendix A: Part A—Granting Benefits worksheet.</li><li>○ Use the <b>Processing a Grant of Benefits</b> job aid.</li><li>○ Be prepared to share your finished activity with other groups.</li></ul></li><li>• Time allowed: 7-10 minutes</li></ul>	


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PowerPoint Slides	Notes
<p><b>Practice Exercise—Granting Benefits Answers</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What decision would you use for granting this award?</li> <li>2. What award type would this decision be processed under in VBMS-A?</li> <li>3. You have successfully entered all the information into VBMS-A. What is your next step in granting benefits?</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Denying Benefits</b></p>  <p align="center">Processing an Award Action</p> <p>The diagram shows four rectangular boxes representing award actions. From left to right, they are: 'Grant Benefits', 'Deny Benefits', 'Award Adjustment', and 'Award Renouncement'. The 'Deny Benefits' box is highlighted with a red border and a red arrow pointing down to it. The other boxes have grey borders and arrows.</p>	
<p><b>Common Steps for Denying Benefits</b></p>  <p>The diagram is a staircase with six steps ascending from bottom-left to top-right. Each step is numbered and has a corresponding action listed to its left. The steps are: Step 1 (Decide the Award Action), Step 2 (Select the Denial Decision in VBMS-A), Step 3 (Generate the Award in VBMS-A), Step 4 (Annotate the Award), Step 5 (Prepare the Decision Notice), and Step 6 (Submit to the Authorizer). Each step is highlighted with a different color.</p>	

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PowerPoint Slides	Notes
<p><b>Denying Benefits—Decide the Award Action</b></p> 	
<p><b>Denying Benefits—Select Denial Decision in VBMS-A</b></p> 	
<p><b>Select Denial Decision in VBMS-A Demo</b></p> 	

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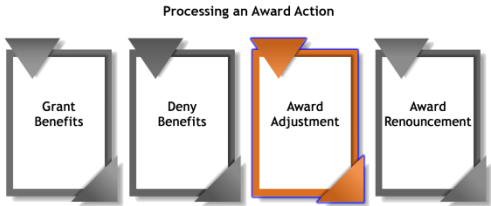
PowerPoint Slides	Notes
<p><b>Denying Benefits—Generate Award in VBMS-A</b></p> 	
<p><b>Denying Benefits—Annotate the Award</b></p> 	





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PowerPoint Slides	Notes
<p><b>Denying Benefits—Prepare the Decision Notice</b></p> 	
<p><b>Decision Notice—Denial Demo</b></p> 	
<p><b>Denying Benefits—Submit to the Authorizer</b></p> 	




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PowerPoint Slides	Notes
<p><b>Practice Exercise—Denying Benefits</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Divide into groups of three.</li> <li>○ Complete Appendix A: Part B—Denying Benefits worksheet.</li> <li>○ Use the <b>Processing a Denial of Benefits job aid</b>.</li> <li>○ Be prepared to share your finished activity with other groups.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Time allowed: 10 minutes</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Practice Exercise—Denying Benefits Answers</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What decision would you use for denying this award?</li> <li>2. What denial decision would be selected in the VBMS-A?</li> <li>3. What is the final step of the denial process?</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Award Adjustment</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Processing an Award Action</p>  <p>The diagram illustrates the 'Processing an Award Action' process. It consists of four sequential steps represented by rectangular boxes with arrows pointing from left to right. The steps are: 'Grant Benefits', 'Deny Benefits', 'Award Adjustment', and 'Award Renouncement'. The 'Award Adjustment' step is highlighted with a thick orange border and a blue arrow pointing to it from the left, indicating it is the current focus of the slide.</p>	



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PowerPoint Slides	Notes
<p><b>Common Steps for Award Adjustment</b></p>  <p>The diagram shows a staircase with seven steps ascending from bottom-left to top-right. Each step is numbered and has a corresponding colored bar to its left. The steps are: Step 1 (orange) - Decide the Award Action; Step 2 (red) - Perform Calculation (If Required); Step 3 (pink) - Enter the Updated Information in VBMS-A; Step 4 (green) - Generate Award in VBMS-A; Step 5 (purple) - Annotate the Award; Step 6 (grey) - Prepare the Decision Notice; Step 7 (blue) - Submit to the Authorizer.</p>	
<p><b>Award Adjustment—Decide the Award Action</b></p>  <p>This diagram is identical to the one above, but Step 1, 'Decide the Award Action', is highlighted with a blue border and a blue bar, indicating it is the current focus of the slide.</p>	




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<p><b>Award Adjustment—Perform Calculation (If Required)</b></p>  <p>The diagram shows a 7-step process for Award Adjustment. The steps are: Step 1: Decide the Award Action; Step 2: Perform Calculation (If Required); Step 3: Enter the Updated Information in VBMS-A; Step 4: Generate Award in VBMS-A; Step 5: Annotate the Award; Step 6: Prepare the Decision Notice; Step 7: Submit to the Authorizer. Step 2 is highlighted with a blue border.</p>	
<p><b>Award Adjustment—Enter Updated Information in VBMS-A</b></p>  <p>The diagram shows a 7-step process for Award Adjustment. The steps are: Step 1: Decide the Award Action; Step 2: Perform Calculation (If Required); Step 3: Enter the Updated Information in VBMS-A; Step 4: Generate Award in VBMS-A; Step 5: Annotate the Award; Step 6: Prepare the Decision Notice; Step 7: Submit to the Authorizer. Step 3 is highlighted with a blue border.</p>	
<p><b>Enter Updated Information in VBMS-A Demo</b></p>  <p>A circular logo with the word "DEMO" in white capital letters on a blue background.</p>	

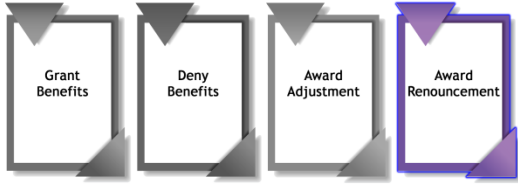
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PowerPoint Slides	Notes
<p><b>Award Adjustment—Generate Award in VBMS-A</b></p> 	
<p><b>Award Adjustment—Annotate the Award</b></p> 	



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<p><b>Award Adjustment—Prepare Decision Notice</b></p>  <p>The diagram shows a 7-step process for Award Adjustment. Step 6, 'Prepare the Decision Notice', is highlighted with a blue border. The steps are: Step 1: Decide the Award Action; Step 2: Perform Calculation (If Required); Step 3: Enter the Updated Information in VBMS-A; Step 4: Generate Award in VBMS-A; Step 5: Annotate the Award; Step 6: Prepare the Decision Notice; Step 7: Submit to the Authorizer.</p>	
<p><b>Decision Notice—Award Adjustment Demo</b></p>  <p>A circular icon with the word 'DEMO' in the center.</p>	
<p><b>Award Adjustment—Submit to the Authorizer</b></p>  <p>The diagram shows a 7-step process for Award Adjustment. Step 7, 'Submit to the Authorizer', is highlighted with a blue border. The steps are: Step 1: Decide the Award Action; Step 2: Perform Calculation (If Required); Step 3: Enter the Updated Information in VBMS-A; Step 4: Generate Award in VBMS-A; Step 5: Annotate the Award; Step 6: Prepare the Decision Notice; Step 7: Submit to the Authorizer.</p>	

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PowerPoint Slides	Notes
<p><b>Practice Exercise—Award Adjustment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Divide into groups of three.</li> <li>○ Complete Appendix A: Part C—Award Adjustment worksheet.</li> <li>○ Be prepared to share your finished activity with other groups.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Time allowed: 10-15 minutes</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Practice Exercise—Award Adjustment Answers</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What decision would you use for processing this award adjustment?</li> <li>2. What information would be updated in the VBMS-A?</li> <li>3. After you have updated in the VBMS-A, what is the next step in the award adjustment process?</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Award Renouncement</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Processing an Award Action</p> 	

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PowerPoint Slides	Notes
<p><b>Common Steps for Award Renouncement</b></p> 	
<p><b>Award Renouncement—Decide the Award Action</b></p> 	



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PowerPoint Slides	Notes
<p><b>Award Renoucement— Discontinue Award in VBMS-A</b></p> 	
<p><b>Discontinue Award in VBMS-A Demo</b></p> 	
<p><b>Award Renoucement— Generate Award in VBMS-A</b></p> 	

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PowerPoint Slides	Notes
<p><b>Award Renoucement—Prepare Decision Notice</b></p> 	
<p><b>Award Renoucement Letter Demo</b></p> 	
<p><b>Award Renoucement—Submit to the Authorizer</b></p> 	


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PowerPoint Slides	Notes
<p><b>Practice Exercise—Award Renouncement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Instructions:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Divide into groups of three.</li><li>○ Complete Appendix A: Part D—Award Renouncement worksheet.</li><li>○ Use M21-1 III.ii.2.H (Renouncements).</li><li>○ Be prepared to share your finished activity with other groups.</li></ul></li><li>• Time allowed: 5-7 minutes</li></ul>	
<p><b>Practice Exercise—Award Renouncement Answers</b></p>	

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PowerPoint Slides	Notes
<p><b>Practice Exercise—Award Process</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Instructions:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Divide into groups of three.</li><li>○ Complete Appendix A: Part E—Award Process Worksheet.</li><li>○ Use the job aid listed in Part E.</li><li>○ Be prepared to share your finished activity with other groups.</li></ul></li><li>• Time allowed: 15-20 minutes</li></ul>	
<p><b>Practice Exercise—Award Process Answers (1 of 2)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Based on this scenario, are there multiple issues for this claim? If so, what are the issues?</li><li>2. If Mr. Curtis was granted benefits, what would be the first step in the award process?</li></ol>	

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PowerPoint Slides	Notes
<p><b>Practice Exercise—Award Process Answers (2 of 2)</b></p> <p>3. 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?</p> <p>4. After you have prepared a decision notice for Mr. Curtis, what is the final step you need to take in the award process?</p>	
<p><b>Questions?</b></p> 	
<p><b>Lesson Summary (1 of 2)</b></p> <p>Lesson Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A single claim may include a combination of grant or denial decisions.</li> <li>• Original, new, or reopened claims are commonly processed resulting in the grant or denial of benefits; whereas adjustments are commonly processed on running awards.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Lesson Summary (2 of 2)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What steps are the same for all award actions?</li> <li>• What system is used to enter and/or update information for an award action?</li> </ul>	

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<b>PowerPoint Slides</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Lesson Summary (2 of 2)</b> <b>Answers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What steps are the same for all award actions?</li><li>• What system is used to enter and/or update information for an award action?</li></ul>	
<b>What's Next</b> Phase 5, Part 3 Knowledge Check Preparation	