pension and fiduciary service

PMC VSR Basic Core Course

Phase 4: Foundational Enrichment

Stages of a Pension Claim

Trainee Guide

May 2024

Stages of a Pension Claim Lesson

Lesson Overview

| Topic | Description |
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| 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. |
| Target Audience: | This lesson is for entry level PMC VSRs.  |
| Lesson References: | * 38 CFR 3.159 (Department of Veterans Affairs assistance in developing claims)
* M21-1 II.i.2.A. (Process Overview for Screening Mail)
* M21-1 I.i.1.A (Description and General Information on Duty to Notify and Duty to Assist)
* M21-1 V.i.1.B (Referrals to the Rating Activity)
* M21-1 VI.i.1.A (Decision Authorization)
* M21-1 VI.i.1.B (Decision Notices)
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| Knowledge Check: | Phase 4: Introduction to Pension Management Knowledge Check |
| Lesson Objectives: | By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:* Describe the stages of a pension claim
* Describe the purpose for initial screening and determining eligibility
* Describe the purpose of claims development and duty to assist/duty to notify
* Describe the purpose of referring a claim to the rating activity
* Describe the purpose of award determination and promulgation
* Describe the purpose of claimant notification
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| What you need: | * Trainee Guide
* Access to VBA Intranet
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| PowerPoint Slides | Notes |
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| **Stages of a Pension Claim** |  |
| **Objectives**By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:* Describe the stages of a pension claim.
* Describe the purpose for initial screening and determining eligibility.
* Describe the purpose of claims development and duty to assist.
* Describe the purpose of referring a claim to the rating activity.
* Describe the purpose of award determination and promulgation.
* Describe the purpose of claimant notification.
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| **Why This Matters!**The **Stages of a Pension Claim** course matters becauseit explains the stages of a pension claim and introduces the activities required in each stage. |  |
| **Definition*****Substantially complete application*** means an application containing* the claimant's name
* his/her relationship to the Veteran, if applicable
* sufficient service information for VA to verify the claimed service, if applicable
* the benefit sought and any medical condition(s) on which it is based
* the claimant's signature
* a statement of income in claims for Veterans Pension or Survivors Pension and Parents' DIC
* identification or inclusion ofpotentially new evidence in supplemental claims, and
* for HLRs, identification of the date of the decision for which review is sought
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| **Stages of a Pension Claim** |  |
| **Initial Screening (1 of 3)**Broken up into two distinct steps:1. **Determine if a claim is substantially complete and was established correctly**

The VSR should review all incoming evidence to ensure the claim: * Is substantially complete;
* Is properly signed;
* Is submitted on an acceptable version of the VA standard form.
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| **Initial Screening (2 of 3)**Once a claim is determined to be substantially complete, the VSR should review the claim for accuracy of claims establishment:* Ensure date of claim is correct
* Ensure payee code and end product (EP) are correct
	+ Ensure the evidence received should not have been associated with an already pending claim
* Ensure claimant’s name and address are correct
* Ensure any applicable POAs have been acknowledged and added to the pending EP
* Ensure contentions are entered correctly
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| **Initial Screening (3 of 3)**1. **Screen for priority processing, immediate denial reasons, or items that need development.**

Once the VSR has determined the claim is substantially complete and was established correctly, the VSR should review the facts of the claim to determine: * If claim warrants priority processing
* If claim warrants immediate denial
* If claim requires further development
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| **PowerPoint Slides** | **Notes** |
| **Claim Development (1 of 2)** **Purpose**: To assist the claimant in obtaining evidence and/or to request evidence from the claimant to substantiate the claim before VA makes a decision on it. |  |
| **Claim Development (2 of 2)**As long as the claimant provides the proper authorization to release the records to VA, the role of the PMC VSR is to:* Make every effort to request all the evidence needed to decide a claim, and
* Make reasonable efforts to obtain records held by a Federal records custodian, and/or privately held records the claimant identified, as long as the claimant provides proper authorization to release records to VA
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| **PowerPoint Slides** | **Notes** |
| **Ready for decision** **Purpose:** If the pension claim requires a rating decision and the claim is otherwise eligible for benefits refer the claim to the rating activity after all development actions are complete. |  |

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| **PowerPoint Slides** | **Notes** |
| **Award Determination/Promulgation (1 of 2)****Purpose**: To address all issues pertaining to a sigle eclaim by:* Awarding benefits when entitlement exists
* Denying benefits when entitlement does not exist
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| **PowerPoint Slides** | **Notes** |
| **Award Determination/Promulgation (2 of 2)**The PMC VSR must: * Conduct a thorough review of the evidence of record.
* Ensure that development and rating review have been completed (if applicable).
* Accurately enter the data into the claims-processing system.
* Generate the award.
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| **PowerPoint Slides** | **Notes**  |
| **Claimant Notification (1 of 2)****Purpose**: To provide the claimant with full knowledge of the decision made and their rights pertaining to that decision. |  |

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| **Power Point Slides**  | **Notes**  |
| **Claimant Notification (2 of 2)**The PMC VSR must notify the claimant of the decision the VA made:* 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.
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| PowerPoint Slides | Notes |
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| **Knowledge Check: Lesson Summary****Time Allowed**: 10 minutes |  |
| **Questions?****This icon prompts you to ask trainees a discussion question or to ask trainees if they have any questions before proceeding with instruction.** |  |
| **What’s Next*** Complete **Stages of a Pension Claim** course evaluation: **TMS ID: 4551444**
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