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 |
| --- | --- |
| 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) |
| 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 |
| What you need: | * Trainee Guide * Access to VBA Intranet |

| PowerPoint Slides | Notes |
| --- | --- |
| **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. |  |
| **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 |  |
| **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. |  |
| **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 |  |
| **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 |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **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 |  |
| **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. |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **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 |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **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. |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **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. |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **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. |  |

| PowerPoint Slides | Notes |
| --- | --- |
| **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** |  |