

PMC VSR Core Course Phase 4: Introduction to Pension Management

Lesson 4: Provide Benefit Information

Lesson Plan

October 28, 2016 Version 1.0

Provide Benefit Information

Lesson Overview

Topic	Description
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 prepare PMC VSRs to respond to direct inquiries from beneficiaries requesting benefit information.
Prerequisite Training Requirements:	Prior to taking the Provide Benefit Information lesson, trainees must complete: PMC VSR Core Course Phases 1–3 Phase 4, Lessons 1-3
Target Audience:	This lesson is for entry level PMC VSRs.

Topic	Description		
Lesson	Master Course Map learning aid		
References:	VA Form 27-0820 (Report of General Information)		
	VA Form 21-0845 (Authorization to Disclose a Record in the Presence of a Third Party)		
	M27-1 I.2.2 (Providing Information to a Third Party)		
	M27-1 I.2.3 (Providing Information About VA Benefits)		
	M27-1 I.2.6 (Handing Non-Claim Actions)		
	M27-1 I.2.7 (Claimant Representation by Non-Attorney or Non-Accredited Agents)		
	o M27-1 I.2.7.a (Regulatory References for Claimant Representation)		
	o M27-1 I.2.7.b (Background on Claimant Representation)		
	M27-1 I.7 (Freedom of Information Act [FOIA] and Privacy Act [PA])		
	38 CFR 14.630 (Authorization for a Particular Claim)		
	38 CFR 1.502 (Disclosure of the Amount of Monetary Benefits)		
	Provide Benefit Information job aid		
Knowledge Check:	Phase 4: Introduction to Pension Management Knowledge Check		
Technical	Program Benefits and Eligibility (PMC VSR)		
Competencies:	VBA Applications (PMC VSR)		
Lesson Objectives:	Respond to direct inquiries from callers requesting benefit information		
	o Verify inquirer before providing information		
	o Provide correct pension benefit information		
	 Document the call in Modern Awards Processing Development (MAP-D) notes and/or on VA Form 27-0820 		

Topic	Description
What You	Lesson plan
Need:	Master Course Map learning aid
	• Slides
	• Projector
	Access to VBA Intranet
	Access to CPKM
	Access to the Provide Benefit Information job aid from VSR Assistant
	Access to Accreditation Search website
	Caller story: Examples of first party call and third party call
	In MAP-D, an example of a documented call
	Paper for group activity
	One example of actual VSO or POA information

Instructor Notes

This lesson provides trainees with the information and references needed to properly verify, provide, and document benefit information. This lesson presents opportunities to work in small groups and pairs to practice scenarios related to determining the type of caller, the information needed to verify the caller, and the type of information that can be provided to the caller. Trainees will complete a comprehensive assessment and survey in TMS upon completion of this phase.

PowerPoint Slides	Instructor Activities
Provide Benefit Information	DISPLAY slide 1. "Provide Benefit Information"
	INTRODUCE yourself as the instructor.
	INTRODUCE the lesson.

PowerPoint Slides	Instructor Activities
PHASE 1 Mandatory Training PHASE 2 PMC VSR Foundation PHASE 3 PMC VSR Resources PHASE 4 Introduction to Pension Management PHASE 5 Stages of Claim PHASE 6 Processing Claims	DISPLAY slide 2. "You Are Here" REFER to the Master Course Map learning aid in the Trainee Guide. DESCRIBE the diagram. EXPLAIN where the trainees are in the phase, what they have completed, and where they are headed next.
 Icebreaker Activity Scenario: You receive a phone call from a person requesting information about benefits for Veteran John C. Hall. How do you respond? The next steps are critical because they can affect the benefits and privacy of a Veteran or beneficiary. Performing these steps incorrectly, could put the benefits received by a Veteran or beneficiary in jeopardy. 	a. "Icebreaker Activity" READ the scenario. ASK the trainees what they would do in this situation and wait for responses. EXPLAIN the consequences of mishandling and miscommunicating benefit information based on your own experiences in fielding calls about benefit information.
 Technical Competencies Program Benefits and Eligibility (PMC VSR) VBA Applications (PMC VSR) 	DISPLAY slide 4. "Technical Competencies" REVIEW technical competencies with trainees.

PowerPoint Slides	Instructor Activities
 Lesson Objectives Respond to direct inquiries from callers requesting benefit information. Verify the inquirer before providing information. Provide correct pension benefit information. Document the call in Modern Awards Processing Development (MAP-D) notes 	DISPLAY slide 5. "Lesson Objectives" PRESENT the objectives for the lesson.
And/or on VA Form 27-0820. Knowledge Check PHASE 1 Mandatory Training PHASE 2 PMC VSR Foundation PHASE 3 PMC VSR Resources PHASE 4 Introduction to Pension Management PHASE 5 Stages of Claim PHASE 6 Processing Claims Multiple Knowledge Check Multiple Knowledge Check	DISPLAY slide 6. "Knowledge Check" INFORM the trainees that they will be assessed on this content in the Phase 4 Knowledge Check. REFER to the Master Course Map learning aid, Lessons by Phase section, to review the lessons included within the Knowledge Check.

PowerPoint Slides	Instructor Activities
 For Your Review Review M27-1 I.7 (Freedom of Information Act [FOIA]) Review Privacy Act (PA) 	DI SPLAY slide 7. "For Your Review"
Review how to conduct a reference search	ASK trainees to summarize the key points of the FOIA and PA.
	KEY POINTS TO REVIEW:
	Definitions of FOIA and PA terms
	Processing FOIA and PA requests
	Charges and fees for processing FOIA and PA requests
	Timeframes for responding to FOIA and PA requests
	The language to use in interim responses to FOIA and PA requests, and
	Controlling FOIA/PA requests
	REMIND trainees that this information is used to determine what information can and cannot be provided to a caller requesting benefit information.
	REVIEW how to conduct a reference search.
	REFER trainees to the CPKM site as a reminder of where these references can be accessed.

PowerPoint Slides		erPoint Slides	Instructor Activities
Verify Inquirer		•	DISPLAY slide 8. "Verify Inquirer"
	 Determine if the caller is a Veteran or surviving dependent (first party). 		DESCRIBE the types of questions that can be asked to determine if a caller is a Veteran or
•	Verify the caller's ID by requesting that the caller provide at least 3 specific pieces of information about the beneficiary that is contained in		surviving dependent. PROVIDE an example from your own experience where you were unable to verify the identity of caller. Share with the trainees how you handled the call, such as:
	SHARE, such as: o Beneficiary's SSN	 If the call was from the claimant, did you advise the claimant to call back with the correct information? 	
	0	Beneficiary's date of birth Veteran's branch of service	NOTE TO INSTRUCTOR : Do not use any real names when referring to on-the-job experiences.
	 Dates of the Veteran's service Caller's full name (not required if caller has already been confirmed as 	EXPLAIN why this is crucial in the overall process of providing benefit information.	
		the Veteran)	REFER trainees to the VBA Intranet Homepage, Benefits Assistance Service to view M27-1 I.7 (Freedom of Information Act [FOIA] and Privacy Act [PA]) for FOIA requirements.

PowerPoint Slides	Instructor Activities
Authorized Third Party Caller (1 of 4)	DISPLAY slide 9. "Authorized Third Party Caller (1 of 4)"
 Determine if the caller is a beneficiary or fiduciary. If the caller is a Veterans Service Organization (VSO) or Power of Attorney (POA), verify his or her identity by asking for applicable identifying information, such as the POA's: Name Organization County represented, if applicable Telephone number Verify accreditation by navigating to the Accreditation Search and confirming that he or she is listed on the beneficiary's file. 	 9. "Authorized Third Party Caller (1 of 4)" EXPLAIN the difference between first party and third party callers. Inform trainees that VSO and POA will be discussed in more detail in later lessons. PROVIDE other examples of identifying information, if applicable. REFER trainees to the Accreditation Search website. DEMONSTRATE how to access the Accreditation Search website using actual VSO or POA information.

PowerPoint Slides	Instructor Activities
Authorized Third Party Caller (2 of 4) If a POA is found in the accreditation search, treat the POA as a first party caller and ask for the Veteran's: Full name SSN or claim number Branch of service If the POA does not know any identifying information, inform the POA that you will need one of the following: A written request from the Veteran or claimant (i.e., VA Form 21-0845, Authorization to Disclose a Record in the Presence of a Third Party) The Veteran or claimant to call VA, or a call back when the unknown information is located If the POA's organization is not showing in the system: Tell the POA that you do not show the organization as having POA.	DI SPLAY slide 10. "Authorized Third Party Caller (2 of 4)" REFER trainees to the Accreditation website and show an example of a POA found. PROVIDE an example of a time you had a POA not able to give the information needed and how you handled the situation. What did you advise the POA to do to get the information? Did you receive a written request or phone call from the claimant? How often does the POA not show up in the system when searching?

PowerPoint Slides	Instructor Activities
 Authorized Third Party Caller (3 of 4) If the individual is listed on the VA Form 21-0845 (Authorization to Disclose Personal Information to a Third Party), verify the security question under box 11 on the form in addition to ID protocol requirements. VA will accept only one person or organization as an authorized party listed on this form. 	DISPLAY slide 11. "Authorized Third Party Caller (3 of 4)" REFER trainees to sample of VA Form 21-0845 (Authorization to Disclose a Record in the Presence of a Third Party) that can be found in CPKM. Direct them to navigate to CPKM, locate the form, and find box 11. Ask for a volunteer to read the five questions out loud. EXPLAIN that the individual MUST be listed on VA Form 21-0845 (Authorization to Disclose a Record in the Presence of a Third Party) in order to provide specific Veteran benefit information.
Authorized Third Party Caller (4 of 4) • Specifics about the claim can	DISPLAY slide 12. "Authorized Third Party Caller (4 of 4)" PROVIDE examples of specific information that
be communicated to this authorized person; however, you cannot take information from him or her as a first party to adjust benefits.	can be provided to an authorized third party caller, such as:Claim statusBenefit amounts
 Individuals acting under the provisions of 38 CFR 14.630 (Authorization for a Particular Claim), are commonly known or referred to as "lay-persons." 	REFER trainees to the VBA Intranet Homepage, Benefits Assistance Service to view 38 CFR 14.630
 Any person may be authorized to prepare, present, and prosecute one claim. Reference: M27-1 I.2.7.a-b (Claimant Representation by Non-Attorney or Non- Accredited Agents). 	and M27-1 I.2.7.a-b (Claimant Representation by Non-Attorney or Non-Accredited Agents). Have trainees navigate to the correct page and request one of the trainees read the reference out loud. EXPLAIN in detail the meaning of each reference.

PowerPoint Slides	Instructor Activities
Pop Quiz (1 of 2) Instructions: Divide into groups of two. Access the Provide Benefit Information job aid. Review the questions.	DISPLAY slide 13. "Pop Quiz (1 of 2)" DIVIDE trainees into groups of 2. Assign groups or ask trainees to form groups. REFER trainees to the Provide Benefit Information job aid located in the VSR Assistant from the PMC VSR button.
 Write answers on a blank sheet of paper. Submit answers to instructor. Time allowed: 5 minutes 	DIRECT trainees to consult with their group members to answer the two questions on the next slide. ALLOW 5 minutes to complete the quiz.
 Pop Quiz (2 of 2) Question #1: What information do you need to verify a caller's identity? Question #2: What must you verify if the caller is a VSO or POA? 	 DI SPLAY slide 14. "Pop Quiz (2 of 2)" PROVIDE the questions to the trainees: Question #1: What information do you need to verify a caller's identity? Question #2: What must you verify if the caller is a VSO or POA?

PowerPoint Slides		erPoint Slides	Instructor Activities
Pop Quiz Answers			DI SPLAY slide 15. "Pop Quiz Answers"
•	Question #1: What information do you need to verify a caller's identity?		DISCUSS each group's answers. Give feedback for each group's answers supported with examples or
	o Beneficiary's SSN	references.	
	0	Beneficiary's date of birth	
	0	Veteran's branch of service	
	0	Dates of the Veteran's service	
	0	Other information only the beneficiary would know	
	0	Caller's full name (not required if caller has already been confirmed as the Veteran)	
•	ve	uestion #2: What must you rify if the caller is a VSO or DA?	
	0	Name	
	0	Organization	
	0	County represented, if applicable	
	0	Telephone number	
	0	Accreditation	

PowerPoint Slides	Instructor Activities
Caller StoryCommon errors made during	DISPLAY slide 16. "Caller Story"
calls are: o Giving out too much information to someone who is not authorized	DISCUSS with the trainees particular instances when you had to provide benefit information to first party and third party callers. Use the following questions to guide your experience:
o Providing too much information to a POA	 How have your methods or processes changed over time with experience?
	What kind of reactions can PMC VSRs expect from callers requesting information?
	What are some common mistakes made during these calls?
	EMPHASIZE the way the instance or instances were handled and what you could/would have done differently.
	DISCUSS common errors that are made during these calls and the best way to avoid or resolve these errors. Such as:
	Giving out too much information to someone who is not authorized
	Providing too much information to a POA
Provide Benefit Information— First Party	DISPLAY slide 17. "Provide Benefit Information—First Party"
PMC VSR may provide the status of a claim to any first	PROVIDE any additional information that may be provided regarding the status of a claim, such as:
party call after verification: o Initial review pending	Any other information that may have been provided in writing by the Veteran or beneficiary
o Development	Financial information
o Due process	
o Authorization	

PowerPoint Slides	Instructor Activities
Provide Benefit Information— Third Party	DISPLAY slide 18. "Provide Benefit Information—Third Party"
 The current amount of monthly public funds (VA benefits) paid to a VA beneficiary is considered public information and can be released to anyone. The caller must be an authorized third party to receive any other kind of benefit information. 	REVIEW criteria for a caller to be considered an authorized third party. EMPHASIZE what constitutes public information and give examples, such as: Current amount of monthly public funds Status of a claim REFER trainees to 38 CFR 1.502 (Disclosure of the amount of monetary benefits) for further guidance. Have trainees navigate to the correct page and ask a trainee to read a portion of the reference aloud.
General VA Questions General VA questions should be answered to include the following: Help with forms Verification of benefit rate Description of pension PMC fax number or mailing address National Calling Center (NCC) toll free number	DISPLAY slide 19. "General VA Questions" EXPAND on the list provided by giving examples of the most common items. Give guidance on exactly how much information can be provided for each item. PROVIDE examples from your personal experience of the types of general questions you have received, such as: Was my claim received? What is the status of my claim? How long will it take to complete my claim? Can my claim be expedited? When will I receive a letter about my claim?

PowerPoint Slides	Instructor Activities
 Practice Exercise—Scenario Instructions: Review the scenario on the next slide. Access the Provide Benefit Information job aid. Write responses on a sheet of paper. Once completed, trade answers with another 	DISPLAY slide 20. "Practice Exercise scenario" ASK trainees to have a pen and paper to compose their answers.
trainee and compare. • Time allowed: 5 minutes Group Activity—Scenario Scenario:	DISPLAY slide 21. "Group Activity—Scenario"
You receive a call from a woman named Jennifer Fein. Ms. Fein states that she is the POA for Veteran Lindsay McCaffrey and that she would like to know what benefits Ms. McCaffrey is receiving and the dollar amounts being received. You have obtained the POA's identifying information and confirmed that that POA is accredited. Based on the information provided, what information can you give Ms. Fein?	ASK trainees to review the scenario and write down their responses on paper. Give trainees 3 to 5 minutes to compose their responses. Once they have all written down their responses, have the trainees trade responses and compare them.

PowerPoint Slides	Instructor Activities
Group Activity—Scenario Answers	DISPLAY slide 22. "Group Activity—Scenario Answers"
 Based on the information given, you can provide the following information to the third party caller: Status of claim Benefit amount 	DISCUSS the answers among the trainees and ask them to identify and trends or inconsistencies among their responses. ADDRESS any issues or questions that arise from the comparisons.
Document the Call Document in MAP-D or VA Form 27-0820 (Report of General Information), any necessary information based on the type of caller, such as: Claimant	DI SPLAY slide 23. "Document the Call" REFER trainees to MAP-D. Have them all navigate to MAP-D. DEMONSTRATE how to document a call in MAP-D.
 Fiduciary VA Form 21-0845 (Authorization to Disclose a Record in the Presence of a Third Party) VSO/POA Others 	EXPLAIN the differences between documenting a call in MAP-D versus VA Form 27-0820 (Report of General Information). EMPHASIZE what should be documented and the
• Others	best way to document based on your experience. Be sure to include common errors and how to resolve them.

PowerPoint Slides	Instructor Activities
 Practice Exercise—Scenario Instructions: Review the scenario on the next slide. Access the Provide Benefit Information job aid. Using the provided VA Form 27-0820 (Report of General Information), document the form the way you would as if the scenario was a phone call taking place. Once completed, trade answers with another trainee and compare. 	DISPLAY slide 24. "Practice Exercise—Scenario" REFER trainees to the VA Forms website and direct them to download and print a copy of VA Form 27-0820 (Report of General Information).
Time allowed: 5 minutes	
Practice Exercise—Scenario Scenario: You receive a call from a woman named Jennifer Fein. Ms. Fein states that she is the POA for Veteran Lindsay McCaffrey and that she would like to know what benefits Ms. McCaffrey is receiving and the dollar amounts. You have obtained the POA's identifying information and confirmed that that POA is accredited. Based on the information provided, what information can you give Ms. Fein?	DISPLAY slide 25. "Practice Exercise—Scenario" SHOW the scenario. Instruct trainees to review the scenario and complete the VA Form the way they would if the scenario were a live call. Give them three to five minutes to complete the exercise. Once completed, have them trade forms with each other to compare how each of them documented the call. PROVIDE a completed example to show correct information and give feedback.

PowerPoint Slides	Instructor Activities	
Concept Review—Trivia Game Instructions:	DI SPLAY slide 26. "Concept Review—Trivia Game"	
 Divide into pairs. Access the Provide Benefit Information job aid. Review the question given. Have one team member raise a hand when ready to answer. Total of 5 questions: Question 1: 5 pts Question 2: 4 pts Question 3: 3 pts Question 4: 2 pts Question 5: 1 pt 	ASK trainees to pair off, forming teams of 2.	
Time allowed: 10 minutes Concept Review—Trivia Game	DISPLAY slide	
Question #1: What do you need to do to verify a first-party caller? Authorized third party caller?	27. "Concept Review—Trivia Game"	
 Question #2: What benefit information can be provided to a first party or authorized third party caller? Questions #3: What benefit 	ASK each question, one at a time. The team to raise their hand and answer the question correct first receives the number of points listed for each question. Keep track of points won by each team on a whiteboard. Tally the number of points at the end to determine the winning team.	
 information can be provided to anyone? Question #4: General VA questions pertain most commonly to what types of information? 		

PowerPoint Slides		Instructor Activities
	oncept Review—Trivia Game aswers (1 of 2) Question #1: What do you need to do to verify a first party caller? Authorized third party caller?	DISPLAY slide 28. "Concept Review—Trivia Game Answers (1 of 2)" PROVIDE trainee teams with results and winner of the game. Go over answers, ask trainees if any clarification is needed, and provide guidance as
	 For a first party caller: Beneficiary's SSN, date of birth, branch of service, dates of Veteran's service, caller's name 	needed.
	o For an Authorized third party caller: For a VSO name, organization, county represented, telephone number, accreditation search, individual listed on VA Form 21-0845. For a POA, treat as a first party caller, accreditation search.	
•	Question #2: What benefit information can be provided to a first party or authorized third party caller?	
	 Status of claim, current amount of monthly public funds, verification of benefit rate, any other information regarding the Veteran's benefits 	

PowerPoint Slides	Instructor Activities
Concept Review—Trivia Game Answers (2 of 2) • Question #3: What benefit	DI SPLAY slide 29 . "Concept Review—Trivia Game Answers (2 of 2)"
information can be provided to anyone?	PROVIDE trainee teams with results and winner of the game. Go over answers, ask trainees if any
 Current amount of monthly public funds (VA benefits) paid to a beneficiary 	clarification is needed, and provide guidance as needed.
 Question #4: General VA questions pertain most commonly to what types of information? 	
o Help with forms	
o Verification of benefit rate	
o Description of pension	
 PMC fax number or mailing address 	
National Call Center (NCC) toll free number	

PowerPoint Slides	Instructor Activities
 Verifying the caller is extremely important when you receive a request for benefits as you are the only one able to provide information regarding the benefits of the Veteran or beneficiary. Be cautious when providing information to a third party caller as the caller may not be authorized to receive all benefit information. 	 DISPLAY slide 30. "Lesson Summary" REVIEW the common errors when providing benefit information, such as: Providing too much information to an unauthorized caller Providing information other than what is given on VA Form 21-0845 (Authorization to Disclose a Record in the Presence of a Third Party) REVIEW what information can be given to anyone calling, such as: Status of a claim Amount being received by the beneficiary
Questions?	DISPLAY slide 31. "Questions?" ASK trainees if they have any questions or concerns regarding providing benefit information. Use this time to clear up any confusion or misconceptions about the information presented.
What's Next Phase 4: Introduction to Pension Management Knowledge Check Preparation	DISPLAY slide 32. "What's Next" DISCUSS the upcoming Phase 4: Introduction to Pension Management Knowledge Check Preparation. EMPHASIZE that they will review all previous lessons, job aids, handouts, and references before taking the Knowledge Check.