

VETERANS BENEFITS CLAIMS PROCESS

Standard Claims Process (All claims are unique. The following is meant to be used only as a general guideline.)

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    A[1. GET EXPERIENCED HELP] --> B[2. COLLECT EVIDENCE]
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    C --> D[4. VA REVIEWS CLAIM]
    D --> E[5. VA RATING DECISION]
  
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1. GET EXPERIENCED HELP


- ☐ Locate your VA regional office online at va.gov/directory.
- ☐ Find a Veteran's Service Officer (VSO) at [NACVSO.org](https://nacvso.org), [DAV.org](https://davy.org), [VFW.org](https://vfw.org), or [LEGION.org](https://legion.org).
- ☐ Work with your VSO to determine your eligibility.
- ☐ Work with your VSO to determine the best claim type.

2. COLLECT EVIDENCE

- ☐ Obtain copies of your service treatment and current medical records.
- ☐ Have a doctor complete your Disability Benefits Questionnaire(s) (DBQs). A VA appointment may be scheduled once claim is filed.
- ☐ Obtain "buddy statements" if needed.
- ☒ The VA will attempt to collect all records but you can help to ensure they are complete.


3. SUBMIT CLAIM

- ☐ Determine how you want your claim to be processed: as a Traditional Claim, a Fully Developed Claim (FDC), or an Intent to File.
- ☐ Register for online claims at eBenefits.gov and submit your claim. There is no cost to register or process your claim.
- OR -
- ☐ Have your VSO help you complete and submit your claim.

 You have **1 YEAR** from your eBenefits registration or Intent to File to finalize your claim.

4. VA REVIEWS CLAIM

- ☒ The VA will review your claim and determine if additional information is needed to determine your rating.
- ☐ Report for any Compensation & Pension (C&P) examinations.
- ☐ Watch your mail for requests from the VA for additional information
- ☐ Continue to keep your existing medical appointments.

 It can take up to **1 YEAR** for the VA to process evidence and issue a Rating Decision.

5. VA RATING DECISION

VA ISSUES RATING DECISION

- ☒ The VA issues a Rating Decision once they determine, if any, your service connection, percent of disability, and effective date.
- ☒ The VA processes your claim for payments as of the effective date and any back pay owed.
- ☐ **ACCEPT** the rating decision; your case will be completed.
- OR -
- ☐ **APPEAL** if you are not satisfied. See the appeals process below.

Claim Appeals Process (At this point, you may consider hiring a lawyer experienced in veterans benefits appeals. **This is not required.**)

6. APPEAL TO THE REGIONAL VA OFFICE/ BOARD OF VETERANS APPEALS	7. COURT OF APPEALS FOR VETERANS' CLAIMS (CAVC)	8. FEDERAL CIRCUIT COURT OF APPEALS	9. APPEAL TO THE U.S. SUPREME COURT
<p>⌋ You have 1 YEAR from the VA Rating Decision to make your appeal and file a Notice of Disagreement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to keep your existing medical appointments. <input type="checkbox"/> Work with your VSO to file a Notice of Disagreement (NOD) with the VA Regional Office. <input type="checkbox"/> You must elect to have your claim reviewed either by the Board of Veterans Affairs (BVA) in Washington or a VA Decision Review Officer (DRO). <div> <div>BVA PROCESS</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The BVA will review your case. <div>BVA ISSUES DECISION</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> You can ACCEPT the decision -OR- Ask the BVA to RECONSIDER -OR- APPEAL to CAVC. </div> <div> <div>DRO PROCESS</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A DRO will take a new look at your case and issue a new decision. If they disagree with the previous rating decision, they will issue a new rating. If they agree with the previous rating decision, you will receive a Statement of Case. <p>⌋ You have 60 DAYS to return the appeal (Form 9) to the VA office if you appeal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Work with your VSO to file Form 9. </div>	<p>⌋ You have 120 DAYS from the BVA decision to file your appeal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to keep your existing medical appointments. <input type="checkbox"/> Work with your VSO to fill out the Court's Form 1 (Notice of Appeal) and send it DIRECTLY TO THE COURT. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> You will need a CAVC accredited representative or attorney to assist you at the court <input type="checkbox"/> Submit the \$50 fee to file, -OR- a Declaration of Financial Hardship form provided by the CAVC. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The CAVC will review your case. <div>COURT ISSUES DECISION</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> You can ACCEPT -OR- APPEAL to the Federal Circuit. 	<p>⌋ You have a limited time from the CAVC decision to file your appeal to the Federal Circuit Court of Appeals. If you choose to appeal, you should contact a lawyer within 10 days.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to keep your existing medical appointments. <input type="checkbox"/> Find a lawyer. You will need to hire a lawyer experienced in veterans benefits appeals for this level of appeal. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Federal Circuit will review your case. <div>COURT ISSUES DECISION</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> You can ACCEPT -OR- APPEAL to the U.S. Supreme Court. 	<p>⌋ You have a limited time from the Federal Circuit decision to file your appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. If you choose to appeal, you should contact a lawyer within 10 days.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to keep your existing medical appointments. <input type="checkbox"/> Find a lawyer. You will need to hire a lawyer experienced in veterans benefits appeals for this level of appeal. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The U.S. Supreme Court may or may not review your case, or may issue a denial. <div>COURT ISSUES DECISION</div>