

Department of Veteran Affairs - Document List for Filing a Claim

Following is a list of documents and information you will probably need as part of a claim for VA benefits. Even if you can not obtain all of the information right away, you should still submit your claim.

- DD-214 (Sometimes called: Report of Separation, Military Record of Service, or Enlistment Record)
- Marriage Certificate (if currently married)
- Divorce papers or death certificate for all prior marriages of either the veteran or spouse/widow(er)
- Birth certificates for all children being claimed as dependents (includes children in school between 18 - 23, helpless children of any age, and all children under 18 whether natural, adopted, or step children)
- Veteran: Doctor's statement (should make reference to medical findings, treatment, diagnosis, and prognosis)
- Widow(er): Should submit veteran's death certificate instead of a doctor's statement
- Social Security number for each family member

Income data for each family member:

- Social Security award letter (or exact amount of check/payment)
- Interest statements or account books from banks, credit union, etc.
- Amount of company or union pension benefits before any deductions
- Unemployment benefits (including dates for first and last checks)
- Sick pay or disability pay including Workman's Compensation (also provide dates for first and last checks)
- Life insurance proceeds
- Earnings from employment
- Net income from business operation or rental income (may be asked to show expenses and gross income information)
- Amount of SSI benefits awarded
- FIA (Department of Social Services) assistance (includes ADC and General Assistance)
- Any other income source (e.g., Land Contract, Savings Bonds, Stocks, Money Certificates, IRAs, 401-Ks, Royalties, trusts, etc.)
- Current value of savings accounts, real estate (excluding home), or non-essential personal property.

NOTE: All documents (especially DD-214) should be either originals or certified copies, if possible. A claim may be filed without all of the required documents; however, all of the above information relevant to the claim will be needed before a decision can be made on your claim. Claims received without full information may take longer to process or be denied until the information is received. Claims based on non-service-connected disability or death generally require active duty during a recognized wartime period.

How to File a VA Claim

If you believe that you have been harmed in anyway through your military experience, you have the right to file a claim for treatment and compensation with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). A claim can be filed at any time and there is never a charge to file a claim. You can submit your claim to any VA office or medical center on VA Form 21-256. It can also be done by mail, after requesting the appropriate forms from the VA or the RAO. Most telephone directories will list the nearest VA facilities under "US Government." Or, you can get most information online at: <http://www.va.gov/>

Assistance of a Veterans Service Officer (VSO) may also be sought. In fact, it is encouraged. All major veterans' organizations (American Legion, VFW, AMVETS, etc) have service officers authorized by the VA

to act in behalf of the veteran. In addition, many state and county government agencies have VSO's. Once again, there is never a charge for the assistance of the VSO. If you feel that your claim is not being handled properly, you should not hesitate to find a different VSO to assist. In some cases individuals other than veterans can use VA services.

Veterans who live in foreign countries other than the Philippines file their claims with the Washington Regional Office (WRO) at 1120 Vermont Avenue NW; Washington, DC 20421.

If the WRO feels your claim is valid they will order an exam. It is the responsibility of claimants residing overseas to meet the exam date and travel to the location designated at their own expense. The Philippines is the only VA regional Office overseas and handles disability claims for veterans residing in the Philippines only. If the WRO feels your claim is valid they will order an exam. On rare occasions at the request of veterans outside the RP the PRO will attempt to conduct Compensation and Pension examinations. However, it becomes complicated because the ordering of the exam must come to PRO from the WRO and coordinating a response from that office has historically been difficult. The normal procedure is for WRO to arrange for the exam through the US Embassy in the country where the veteran is residing. The results of the exam are returned to the WRO and adjudication of the claim takes place back there. If for some reason the exam is decided to be coordinated through the PRO the only reimbursement you would receive is for your travel expense within the Philippines.

Retirees are encouraged to establish their eligibility by enrolling with the VA. With the cutbacks in Military Treatment Facilities (MTF) and the uncertainty of TRICARE services, VA should always be considered in your fall back plans. There will be a Means Test. Amazingly, less than one-third of eligible veterans and retirees use the VA. Source: Soldiers For the Truth Newsletter JUN 00 & VARO Manila

Veterans Administration Nationwide Benefits Information 1-800-827-1000

<http://www.va.gov/hepatitusc> - VA 'Hepatitis-C' Web Site