

TDVS Benefits Bulletin **21-9**

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TDVS Updates

VetraSpec Update

At the request of several County Veteran Service Officers, VetraSpec will soon include both the VetraSpec ID and Social Security Number in the “My Task” function. VSOs use this feature frequently along with VA systems and this should avoid the need to access every individual VetraSpec record before using VA systems.

As a reminder, VetraSpec has a “My Task” function that allows users to set reminders and follow up notices for clients they are assisting. Here’s a [step-by-step guide](#) to effectively use this tool.

Multi Agency Recovery Centers

TDVS is currently supporting veterans and family members impacted by flooding in West Tennessee by staffing Multi Agency Recovery Centers in Humphreys, Hickman and Dickson Counties. Please visit [Middle Tennessee Flood Recovery](#) for information on recovery resources and support.

Summer/Fall Training Schedule


- September 8th – September Lunch and Learn – How to Read a Rating Decision
- October 13th to October 15th – (Mandatory) Annual Accreditation Training – Registration invitations were sent on Monday, August 2nd. Lodging reservations can be made by phone at (615) 797-3101 or (800) 250-8613 and mention group code 1252 no later than September 10, 2021. This year NVLSP presenters will be virtual with a few presenters in-person.
 - October 13, 2021 - in-person registration will open at 11:00 am CST and the conference will begin at 1:00 pm CST. The agenda is being finalized and will be published soon. Please contact your Regional Director if you have questions regarding Annual Accreditation Training.

Rental and Utility Assistance




[Benefits Bulletin 21-8](#) highlighted, VA assistance to help veterans avoid eviction.

The Tennessee Housing Development Agency also offers rent relief and utility assistance.



Renters who have experienced economic hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and who meet additional eligibility requirements may qualify for this assistance.

OVERDUE UTILITIES? If you've fallen behind on your utility bill due to COVID-19, THDA's Rent Relief program can help.



844-500-1112 
THDA.ORG/COVIDRENTRELIEF

VA and Veteran Benefit Updates

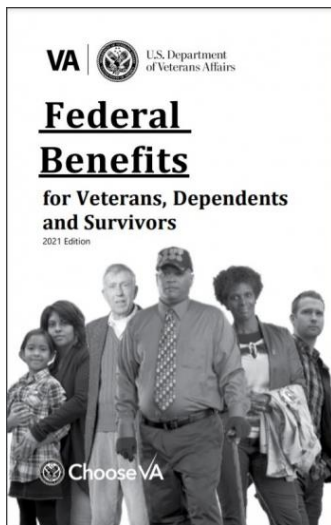
Board of Veterans' Appeals - 10182 Timeliness Recalculation

The Board of Veterans' Appeals has learned that a limited number of Veterans may have had their Board Appeal forms (VA Form 10182, Decision Review Request: Board Appeal (Notice of Disagreement)) mistakenly rejected for being untimely. Out of an abundance of caution, the Board is sending out a wide notice to help ensure no other Veterans were impacted by this. If you filed a VA Form 10182 with the Board between February 19, 2019, and March 23, 2021, and believe it may have been improperly rejected as untimely, please contact [TDVS's Appeals Division](#) for assistance.

TDVS will assist in drafting a letter to the "Clerk of the Board" no later than March 1, 2022. In the letter, we will ask the Board to "RECALCULATE TIMELINESS" and be sure to include the Veteran's full name, claim number or SSN, the date of the rating decision appealed to the

Board, and the date of the original VA Form 10182 appeal form that the Board said was untimely.

VA's 2021 Federal Benefits Handbook for Veterans, Dependents and Survivors



VA's [2021 Federal Benefits Handbook for Veterans, Dependents and Survivors](#) is now available for download. This handbook is a great tool that provides a concise overview of VA benefits and services.

The handbook may be a good desktop tool as it contains interactive links to additional information on VA benefits and services.

VEAP & Recent Court Decision Update

As highlighted in [Benefits Bulletin 21-7](#), the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit issued an important veteran benefit opinion in [Rudisill v. McDonough](#). The Court found that veterans who qualify for both Montgomery GI Bill and Post-9/11 GI Bill for multiple periods of military service should be able to draw benefits from each program.

VA estimates 115,000 veterans may be entitled to a refund of this benefit. Eligible veterans must have entered active duty between Jan. 1, 1977 to June 30, 1985; completed their first period of service; contributed to VEAP while on active duty and before April 1, 1987; have unused contributions; and not have been dishonorably discharged.

If you have unused VEAP funds, you should submit VA Form 22-5281 after completing sections 1-6, 14, 15, and 18. It will take 3-4 weeks to receive a response and/or refund via U.S. Treasury check. If you are unsure if you are eligible for a refund or whether you participated in VEAP, call the Education Call Center at 1-888-442-455 Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m.– 6:00 p.m. Central Time.

Accessing Community Care

As highlighted in past Benefits Bulletins, VA's [Borne the Battle](#) podcast provides timely information on important resources, VA offices, and the challenges veterans endure during and after their service. Here's a recent episode that share's information about how veterans can access care in their local community.



Quality Review Insights

Lack of Veteran or Claimant Signature

TDVS's quality review program frequently identifies forms that lack a veteran, claimant, or VSO signature. COVID restrictions in many communities have caused us to modify how we obtain client signatures. As a reminder, with limited exceptions, VA has not relaxed or modified the signature requirements for compensation and pension claims and appeals.

The only exceptions are for certain Vocational Rehabilitation forms such as VBA-28-1900 and VBA-28-8832 and the VA Form 10182 (Decision Review Request: Board Appeal). On these forms, the typed name of the veteran or claimant will suffice for a signature.

All other forms continue to follow existing guidance that requires a wet, electronic, or digital signature and is outlined in more detail below.

What forms can a representative sign?

Representatives have the authority to prepare and submit certain types of claims and other claim-related documents on behalf of the represented individual without that individual's signature. These include but are not limited to –

- Intent to file (ITF) a claim
- Supplemental Claim
- Request for higher-level review
- Legacy Substantive Appeal

A POA may prepare, but may not sign, documents that require the claimant's signature, such as (this list is not all forms...but rather several examples) –

- Original Applications for Veterans Benefits
- VA Form 21-8940, Veteran's Application for Increased Compensation Based on Unemployability
- VA Form 21-4142, Authorization to Disclose Information to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- VA Form 21-0538, Mandatory Status of Dependents

Please review [VA's M-21 Adjudication Procedures Manual](#) – I.3.A.4.b. – for additional information.

Practice Like a Pro

Pension Management Center Updates (Milwaukee)

Milwaukee's Pension Management Center (PMC) recently provided two templates that VSOs can use to practice like a pro.

- [Incompetency Notice Response](#) – The Incompetency Notice Response solicits for information regarding due process for incompetency on a VA Form 4138, Statement in Support of Claim. The goal of requesting this information is to streamline due process for incompetency proposals by either having the claimant tell VA they agree with the proposal and appoint a fiduciary or that they do not agree with the proposal and will send information to refute the proposal.
- [Attendant Affidavit](#) – Payments to an in-home attendant can be counted as unreimbursed medical expenses for purposes of VA's pension and survivor pension programs. This

template Attendant Affidavit can be used for a claimant to report this unreimbursed medical expense.

Here are [notes](#) with additional details on these templates and other PMC updates.

VBMS – POA Electronic Notification

In mid-August VBMS was updated to provide accredited representatives electronic notification within VBMS when new documents are added to the eFolder of a veteran whom they represent.

At present, there is limited filter capability. The [Release Notes](#) include additional information and step-by-step instructions for utilizing this new feature.

Advocate Spotlight

When a Veteran passes away, it is indeed hard for the widow. As veteran advocates, we work to alleviate some of the hardship by helping the widow file a claim. Recently, in the case of a widow from Dickson County, the veteran passed away with a claim pending. All his C&P exams were completed one month prior to his death and all other evidence in support of the claim was of record. The CSO working with the widow notified VA of the veteran's death. When the C&P exam contractor was notified, the veteran's exams were not forwarded to VA.

TDVS was contacted and subsequently reached out to the regional office C&P exam liaisons for assistance. The RO was able to work with the exam contractor to retrieve the Veteran's C&P exam results. With that final evidence, VA was able to adjudicate the claim in the widow's favor. She was granted Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, service-connected death benefits, and accrued benefits. Another great example of how local, state and Federal partners can work together to the benefit of Tennessee veterans and their families.

If you have an example of teamwork between Veteran service offices/organizations across the state making a difference in the lives of Tennessee veterans, please share with your Regional Director for possible inclusion in an upcoming "Advocate Spotlight."

TDVS Benefits Bulletins Can Be Found on the [VSO Tools](#) Portion of TDVS's Website