

TDVS Benefits Bulletin
20-7

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TDVS Updates

VetraSpec Updates

On May 27, 2020, VetraSpec added a General Communication Log feature for Tennessee VetraSpec users. **Please note that:**

- VetraSpec created this feature because they were aware that several customers used a fake veteran record to log general office communications. Since this was not ideal, they created a General Contact Log.
- You may use this to log any and all communications in your office **not associated with a veteran record.**
- The entries will **NOT** be associated with a veteran, even if you enter the veteran's name. This prevents other VetraSpec users across the state from having a clear record of the previous assistance provided to a veteran or claimant. If you need to enter a communication for a specific veteran, please continue to go into that veteran's record and use the Communication tab.

On June 22, 2020, VetraSpec added enhancements to the "My Task" function and added Appeals Modernization Act tracking capabilities.

- The ability to assign tasks to others in your office. When you assign tasks to others, we log who assigned the task, who it is assigned to and the date it was assigned.
- The ability to Reassign all tasks from one person to another (if you are a super user).
- The ability to view all tasks for all users in your office.
- The ability to view tasks you have assigned to others to track their progress.
- The ability to track the three dates for the AMA forms. You will find the dates on the Add and Edit Pending Issues screens.

VA and Veteran Benefit Updates

Mail Automation

The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) is working over the next 7 months to automate its mail processes in order to provide faster claims processing for veterans and claimants. In support of this effort VBA identified concrete actions VSOs can take to support faster claims processing:

- Use Electronic Filing
 - TDVS is already supporting this effort by using Digits-to-Digits or Direct Submit for nearly all claims and compensation mail filed through the Appeals Division.
- Double Check Form Completion
 - TDVS is already supporting this effort through its quality review program. We have frequently identified and shared information to support form completion and successful electronic filing.
 - Digits to Digits (D2D) program remains the Appeals Division's preferred method to file eligible forms, which include the VA Form 21-22, VA Form 21-0966 and VA Form 21-526EZ. Tips to help ensure the forms you generate are D2D eligible can be found here - [Digits to Digits and Digital Filing Fact Sheet](#)

**Starting January 1, 2021, VA will no longer be accepting faxed submissions.

VGLI Conversion Period Extended

On June 11, 2020, VA [announced](#) in the Federal Register it was extending the deadline for former service members insured under the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) to apply for Veterans' Group Life Insurance as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency. VA administers the [Veterans' Group Life Insurance](#) (VGLI) program. This rule extends the existing time period by 90 days that a former service member can apply for VGLI following separation from service.

Travel Reimbursement Program

VA is deploying a [new travel reimbursement program](#) (Beneficiary Travel Self-Service System or (BTSSS) that is expected to be deployed in Tennessee in September. This new program will be available 24/7 at [AccessVA](#), so veterans can claim mileage reimbursement for travel to and from both VA health care or VA authorized non-VA health care service locations.

Veteran Readiness and Employment Service

Effective June 22, 2020 Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service became the [Veteran Readiness and Employment Service](#) (VR&E).

C&P In-Person Examination – Restart

On May 28, 2020, VA [announced](#) it was resuming in-person Compensation and Pension (C&P) exams as VA medical centers reopen in select locations across the county. Since that time, VA has continued to expand the resumption of in-person C&P examinations across the nation, including in much of Tennessee. VA has developed a [zip code locator tool](#) to determine if in-person C&P examinations have resumed in your area.

Quality Review Insights

Travel Pay Requests – VAF 10-532

Please remember that requests for reimbursement of travel expenses should not be submitted via Package A Claim. This form should be presented in person or mailed to the VA health care facility where care was provided. Addresses of VA health care facilities can be found at: <http://www.va.gov/directory>. As mentioned, in September veterans will also be able to file for travel expenses via the VA's [new travel reimbursement program](#) (Beneficiary Travel Self-Service System or (BTSSS)).

VSO Hotline

VA has a dedicated VSO hotline -- 855-225-0709 -- that can assist service officers in answering common questions or addressing common issues without completing and packaging any forms. This number is dedicated to service officers who are assisting veterans or family members and should not be used by individual claimants seeking VA assistance.

For example:

- Change of Address – The VSO hotline can be used to quickly update a veteran or claimant's mailing address for purposes of compensation benefits. A veteran can also now change their address when applying for benefits on the VA Form 21-526EZ.
- Dependency Claims – The VSO hotline can initiate a simple dependency claim over the phone.
- Direct Deposit – The VSO hotline can quickly update a veteran or claimant's direct deposit information.
- Status of Claim – During quality review, the Appeals Division has seen VA Forms 21-4138 with statements such as "I would like the status of my pension." Or "Would like status update on my claim (Appeal) please?" The VSO line, or in the alternative VBMS or

TDVS's Appeals Division, would allow you to provide a better update than any response you might receive from filing a 4138 regarding the status of a claim or appeal.

- Notice of Death – The VSO hotline can be utilized to report a veteran or claimant’s death to VA and to collect information, such as whether the veteran had service-connected conditions or VA life insurance, necessary to assist surviving family members with survivor benefits.

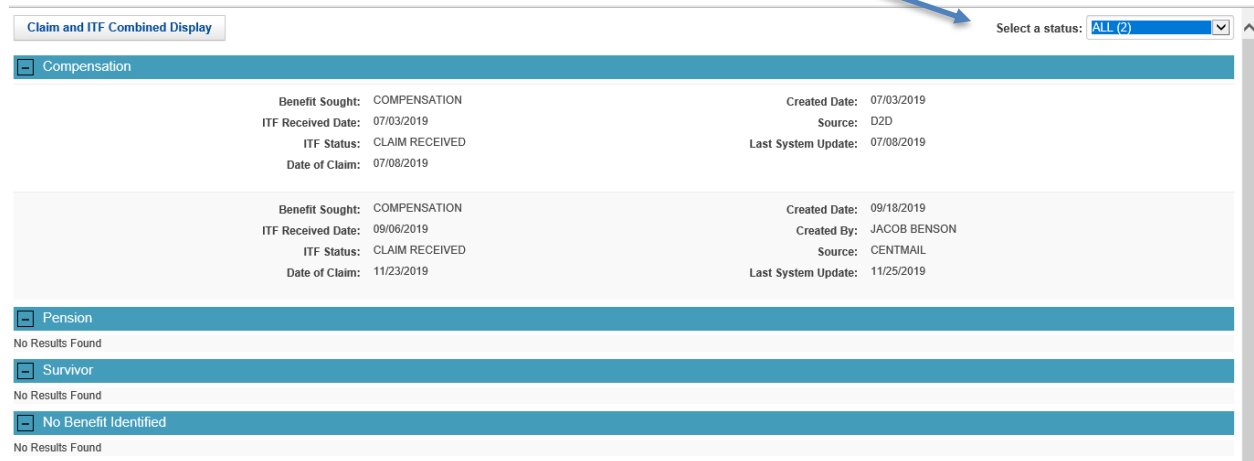
Locating an Intent to File in VBMS

The Digits to Digits (D2D) program remains the Appeals Division’s preferred method to file eligible forms, which includes the VA Form 21-0966 (Intent to File a Claim for Compensation and/or Pension, or Survivors Pension and/or DIC) or ITF. An ITF successfully filed using D2D will not appear as a .pdf in the veteran’s VBMS “eFolder Documents.”

Rather than searching the eFolder Documents, use the “Intent to File” tab to locate a veteran’s ITFs.



You can also use the “Claim and ITF Combined Display” to locate the ITF history for a veteran. To access the feature, select the Intent to File tab from a veteran’s profile and then select the “Claim and ITF Combined Display” button on the top left-hand side of the screen. Note the select a status option at the right. Setting this to “ALL” ensures you can view active, duplicate and expired ITFs.



Digital Filing

The Digits to Digits (D2D) program remains the Appeals Division's preferred method to file eligible forms, which include the VA Form 21-22, VA Form 21-0966 and VA Form 21-526EZ. Tips to help ensure the forms you generate are D2D eligible can be found here - [Digits to Digits and Digital Filing Fact Sheet](#)

Practice Like a Pro

VA's Share Application

Share is a VA application used by VA Regional Offices that provides a single computing system with data sources located on different databases in multiple locations. TDVS employees and County partners can utilize Share to support benefit advocacy. Here's a [refresher](#) on Share's functions and some basics on how to utilize this tool to practice like a pro.

Wolfe v. Wilkie

The National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP) has been litigating a class action lawsuit know as *Wolfe v. Wilkie*. NVLSP is seeking to force VA to reimburse veterans that had been denied reimbursement for deductibles and coinsurance for emergency medical care received at a non-VA hospital.

As part of a recent court order, VA has begun mailing over a million corrective notices to veterans who had applied for reimbursement, but whom VA misinformed about the types of medical expenses VA could reimburse. VA has admitted the improper notice may have discouraged veteran's from seeking reimbursement. VA also needs to re-decide more than 72,000 previous decisions denying reimbursement.

You may remember VA discussed this case at TDVS's 2019 Annual Training during the [Recent Court Decisions You Can Use](#) segment. You can also learn more about the history of this class action [here](#).

If VA denied payment for deductible or coinsurance payments for emergency treatment at a non-VA facility:

- File Higher Level Review if denied within the past year;
- File a CUE claim (if one-year appeal deadline has passed);
- Follow VA instructions in corrected notice letter or notice of readjudication of a previously denied claim.



You can also assist veterans that have questions about their VA reimbursement claim or have received correspondence from VA or NVLSP by using the following resources:

- Wolfe Case Class Member – contact NVLSP using the [Wolfe Class Member Form](#)
- Not a member of the class in Wolfe – contact VA at 1-877-466-7124. This number has been established by VA to address veteran questions regarding reimbursement claims.

COVID-19 and Remote Claims Assistance

As a reminder, additional updates related to COVID-19 and tips on providing remote claims assistance can be found in the [special TDVS Benefit Bulletin](#). TDVS has provided three updates during the evolution of the Novel Coronavirus outbreak.

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