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▶▶▶ February 2015 ◀◀◀

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VA Updates Disability Claims Application Process for Veterans, Survivors *New Process Will Reduce Processing Times and Improve Quality*

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced that it is introducing a uniformed disability claims form to better serve Veterans, families and survivors. Standardizing process by which Veterans file claims and initiate appeals will make it easier for Veterans and their survivors to clearly state what benefits they are seeking from VA and provide information that is necessary to process their claims and appeals. The new forms eliminate applicant guesswork, which often leads to delays in decisions and ultimately delays in receiving benefits. The new regulations go into effect in late March 2015.

“We must do everything that we can to make it as fast and easy as possible for Veterans and their survivors to file for and receive an accurate decision on their claim,” said VA Secretary Robert McDonald. “Our Veterans and survivors will know, at the outset of the claims process, what is needed, which removes subjective interpretation from the process. We want to eliminate any barriers that make it difficult for our Veterans or survivors to receive benefits to which they are entitled.”

In the past, a Veteran or survivor did not have to use a certain form to seek compensation or other benefits from VA. Claims or appeals (Notice of Disagreement) could be submitted on any piece of paper which caused delays due to missing information.

By using standard forms for all disability claims, VA can more quickly and accurately identify what the Veteran is claiming or appealing. This will allow VA to immediately move on to next steps in the evidence-gathering and decision-making process, which saves administrative processing time and speeds the delivery of earned benefits. The existing process is also inconsistent with most, if not all, other government and non-government application processes, such as applying for social security, applying for a driver's license, applying for a job or filing for an income tax refund.

“These days government agencies and private businesses rely on standard forms to deliver faster and more accurate customer service,” said Under Secretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey. VA's ability to deliver better customer service requires the use of standard forms as well. That is why we worked extensively with our partners in the Veterans community to streamline the way we process claims while preserving the effective date rules concerning informal claims through the creation of a new *intent to file a claim* process.”

The updated process also includes standardizing the traditional informal claims process by employing a new “Intent to File a Claim” process which affords the Veteran or survivor one year to compile the necessary documentation or evidence to support the claim while preserving an effective date of claim.

More information about VA Forms [21-526EZ](#), [21-527EZ](#), [21-534EZ](#) or VA Form [21-0958](#), *Notice of Disagreement*, may be found at www.ebenefits.va.gov or www.va.gov/vaforms/.

DOWNLOAD: Fact Sheet - Claims and Appeals Forms Update <http://veterans-for-change.org/documents/finish/103-as-mentioned-in-the-vfc-newsletter/16862-fact-sheet-claims-and-appeals-forms-update/0>