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If Veterans don't help Veterans, who will?

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Five Ways to Help Your Disability Claim Now

1. Get your hands on your C-File and READ it

Your C-File is your key to success! Often times, the VA will give a reason for denying a claim, and their basis for denial can be found right in the C-File! Many cases for service connection can be won with one small piece of information in your medical records. For example, you may find an early symptom of your disability in your service records, or your performance evaluations may have gotten worse around the time of your PTSD stressor.

2. Research your disability.

Often times, knowing more about your disability will help you find what evidence you're looking for in your C-File. Knowing that constipation can be an early warning sign of Parkinson's may help you demonstrate that your Parkinson's manifested earlier than the VA claims, or knowing that Lithium can cause chronic kidney disease may help you show that your kidney disease is secondary to your service-connected bipolar disorder.

3. Know how to handle C&P examinations

Often, veterans make a mistake by not understanding the purpose of C&P examinations. A common problem is not telling the truth about your disability. This can work both ways: a veteran may exaggerate his symptoms, but it works the other way as well. For example, veterans tend to be a proud bunch, and many are used to hiding symptoms of their disabilities from friends, coworkers, and loved ones. Many vets are so used to hiding the pain of their mental illness that they may be overly friendly or downplay their symptoms, even though the entire purpose of the exam is to show the VA what your symptoms are, and the severity of those symptoms. If you normally don't shower or brush your hair, don't show up clean shaven in a three-piece suit! Be yourself. Also, write down a complete list of your symptoms ahead of time, and ask friends or family. Often, those around us see symptoms we may not be aware of. Most importantly, show up! A great guide to C&P exams can be found [here](#).

4. Know how and why to expedite your claim

If you are seriously ill, older than 75, in severe financial hardship, or facing homelessness, you have the right to expedite your VA claim.

5. Get some "Buddy Statements"

Often, your medical or service records do not tell the whole story of your disability. Collect buddy statement from family and friends. Ask your family and friends to talk about the symptoms they've observed, as well as when the symptoms started. Ask your brothers from service to write about your nexus, or any signs that your disorder manifested during service. Often, buddy statements can make or break your claim.