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*If Veterans don't help Veterans, who will?*

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# Fully Developed Claims

## What Is a Fully Developed Claim?

The Fully Developed Claims (FDC) program is an optional initiative that offers Veterans and survivors faster decisions from VA on compensation, pension, and survivor benefit claims.

Veterans and survivors simply submit all relevant records in their possession, and those records which are easily obtainable, such as private medical records, at the time they make their claim and certify that they have no further evidence to submit. VA can then review and process the claim more quickly.

## Many Types of Claims

There are many types of claims for disability compensation. For example, if you're filing a VA claim for the very first time, you have an **original claim**. **Areopened claim** means you have new *and* material evidence and you want VA to reconsider a claim it once denied. There are also **new claims**, **secondary claims**, and **special claims**.

To learn more about which type of claim you may have and the evidence and forms you need with your submission, view the [Claims and Evidence](#) page. Your claim must meet all the applicable requirements listed to be considered for the FDC program.

## Who Can File an FDC?

**Veterans** may file an FDC for disability compensation for the following reasons:

- An injury, disability, or condition believed to have occurred or been aggravated by military service.
- A condition caused or aggravated by an existing service-related condition.

**Veterans** and their **families** and **survivors** may also file pension or dependency and indemnity compensation (survivor) claims at these pages:

- [File an FDC: survivor benefits](#)
- [File an FDC: pension](#)

## Why Use the FDC Process?

### FDC puts you in control, and it's faster and risk-free.

By filing an FDC, Veterans and survivors take charge of their claim by providing all the evidence at once. By then certifying that there is no more evidence, VA can issue a decision faster.

File an FDC without risk. Participation will not affect the attention your claim receives from qualified VA rating staff or the benefits to which you're entitled. If VA determines other non-federal records exist and are required to decide a claim, VA will simply remove the claim from the FDC program and process it through the traditional claims process. Once you initiate your FDC, you'll have up to one year to complete it. Should VA approve your claim, you'll be paid back to the day you initiated your claim.

 [View a step-by-step process of completing a Fully Developed Claim online.](#)

## What's the Best Way to File an FDC?

- The best way to file an FDC is electronically at [eBenefits.va.gov](#). Once you log on to your account, VA recommends you appoint an accredited Veterans Service Officer to help you initiate your claim, gather the required medical records and evidence, and submit your claim. If you don't yet have an [eBenefits.va.gov](#) account, [register](#) today.

- If you prefer to file your FDC by paper, complete [VA Form 21-526EZ](#) and visit your local [regional office](#). You can appoint an accredited Veterans Service Officer to help you prepare and submit your claim. You can also appoint your accredited Veterans Service Officer online at [eBenefits.va.gov](#).

## How Should I Prepare My FDC?

- Register for an [eBenefits.va.gov](#) account.
- Next, appoint an accredited Veterans Service Officer who can provide free, expert assistance.
- Gather relevant documents, such as private medical records. While VA will obtain Federal records on your behalf, such as your DD-214 or service medical records, submitting them, if you have them will save time. If you believe there is not a notation in your service record describing your disability, submit letters from friends or those you served with that tell us about the facts of your claim ("buddy statements").
- Initiate your claim at [eBenefits.va.gov](#) or call **1-800-827-1000** for assistance.

✔ [Here's a detailed, easy-to-follow, checklist on how to prepare your FDC](#)

✔ [Here's an easy to use brochure on the FDC program that you can download](#)

✔ [Here's a comprehensive video on the Fully Developed Claims program](#)