

Checklist for Submitting Fully Developed Compensation Claims

We created the checklist below to make sure that you construct a complete and well documented application for your Fully Developed Claim for Disability Compensation. We will apply this checklist to each of the 18 different types of common Compensation applications covered in Chapter 5. The required steps for a specific type of application will be included for that specific claim. The steps that are not necessary for a specific type of application will also be excluded for that specific claim.

Not all of these steps apply to every type of disability application. In fact, there are not any types of claims that require all 11 steps. We provide a brief description of each step below. But for the purpose of brevity, with each of the 18 different types of applications, we do not include the steps with their descriptions. We just include the steps. If you have any question simply come back to this page where we have provided the descriptions.

1. Determine Entitlement Based on Service and the Merit of Your Claim

Make sure that you meet the active duty requirements outlined in Chapter 1 as well as character of discharge requirements and any issues with misconduct. Be honest about whether you think your current illness or disability is a result of your service. Don't just submit an application thinking you are entitled to something and hope that perhaps it "sticks." Submitting a claim without merit wastes the resources of the Department of Veterans Affairs and makes it more difficult for those who have legitimate claims.

2. Submit an Intent to File, VA Form 21-0966, but Don't File a Claim at This Point

The Intent to File will establish an effective date for payment and give you a full year to fulfill all of the remaining steps of this checklist. Do not file an application at this point as it will screw up the whole process and destroy any hope of your maintaining control over your claim. If you decide to use eBenefits for your claim, only complete the online application to the point at which you have furnished all of your personal information. **DO NOT CLICK THE SUBMIT BUTTON. Filling out an incomplete application does generate an Intent to File with eBenefits.**

3. Obtain a Copy of Your Discharge

If you do not have a copy of your discharge, follow the instructions in Chapter 4. If you decide to use eBenefits, a certification of your discharge is available online inside eBenefits and it is not necessary to submit the discharge if you complete the application in eBenefits. Follow the instructions in step #2 and do not submit the application if you are using eBenefits. If you decide to do a paper application after starting out with eBenefits, you can do that, but then you must submit a copy of your discharge with the paper application.

4. Obtain Copies of Service Treatment Records

Service Treatment Records are not required for every one of the 18 different applications we discuss in this chapter. We will let you know which type of application will require these records by including this step in the checklist for that particular application. Follow the instructions in Chapter 4 for obtaining these records.

5. Obtain Copies of Your Military Personnel File

Military personnel records are generally not required for any application for Compensation unless you need to prove a duty assignment or assignment to a particular military facility location. We will let you know for the particular application type whether you should order personnel records or not. Follow instructions in Chapter 4 for obtaining these records.

6. Obtain of Copies of VA Medical Center Records

If you have obtained health care services at a VA Medical Center in the past or currently, the Regional Office will want a copy of these records whether they apply to your service-connected claim or not. Beat them to these records by following the instructions in Chapter 4. Every benefit type requires that you do this even if the records are not going to be used by VA. You should follow the instructions in Chapter 4 for organizing these records and provide tables of contents and summaries when you submit your claim.

7. Obtain Copies of Your Own Private Medical Records

You are always going to have to provide private or government facility medical records that pertain to your particular disability, illness or disease. If these records are available you must furnish them. Do not allow VA to order these records for you as you want to follow the steps in Chapter 4 by organizing these records and making it easy for the rating authority to understand your current condition.

8. Obtain Your Own DBQs from Private Clinicians

Not all applications require a DBQ, but for direct service-connected claims you should plan on needing one or more DBQs. We will let you know for the particular application type whether you should obtain your own DBQs. Follow the instructions in Chapter 4 for obtaining DBQs.

9. Obtain Your Own Private Medical Opinions

Not all applications require a medical opinion for service connection. We will let you know which application requires this step. Follow the instructions in Chapter 4 on obtaining private medical opinions.

10. Write a Detailed and Credible Lay Statement to Describe Your Claim

Not all applications require a lay statement from you or from buddies or from a member of your family. We will let you know which application requires this step. Follow the instructions in Chapter 4 on producing lay statements.

11. Follow Our Instructions in Chapter 4 for Submitting the Claim

Chapter 4 covers our unique system that we have designed and that we believe will give you better results with your claims applications. Don't attempt an application without reading Part 1 of Chapter 4, unless you are absolutely certain you know what you are doing without that instruction.