

Department of Veterans Affairs Briefing

Jacqueline Imboden,
Compensation Service

Mike Carr,
Benefits Assistance Service

Special presentation for the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's Committee on Functional Assessment for Adults with Disabilities.

Veterans Benefits Administration
April 19, 2018

VA



**U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs**

Agenda

- Disability Compensation Overview
- Types of Records Collected
- Sources of Records
- Providers of Medical Records
- Determining Service Connection
- Evaluating Disabilities
- Combined Ratings
- Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment
- Electronic Resources

Disability Compensation

What is it?

A tax-free benefit paid to Veterans for a disability that was incurred in or aggravated by military service. Certain Veterans are eligible for disability compensation based on the presumption that the disability is service connected.

Who qualifies?

Veterans discharged from service under conditions other than dishonorable and who have a current disability due to injury, disease, or psychological issue incurred in or aggravated by military service.



Types of Records Collected

Examples of evidence used for claims that shows functional impairment:

- Private treatment records
- Veterans Health Administration (VHA) health records
- Disability Benefit Questionnaires (VA and private physicians)
- Records from other federal agencies (i.e. SSA, DoD)
- Records from VA Vet Centers

Sources of Records

- Submission of records by claimant or representative
- Schedule the Veteran for a Compensation and Pension (C&P) exam
- Obtain VHA records electronically
- Directly request copies of records from other federal agencies or private entities

Providers of Medical Records

- Private physicians
- VHA health providers
- C&P health examiners
- Mental health counselors
- Vocational rehabilitation counselors

Determining Service Connection

Three step process:

1. Did the disability incur in or was caused by service?
2. Is the Veteran diagnosed with the disability?
3. Is there a nexus between the disability and military service?

Evaluating Disabilities

- Adjudicator reviews all medical records to determine severity of disability
- Applies the rating criteria under 38 CFR part 4 to the disability(ies)
- Assigns a percentage

Note: VA ratings represent the average impairment in earning capacity

Combined Ratings

- VA combines multiple disabilities into a single, combined rating to pay out benefits
- VA disability ratings use the “Whole Person Theory”
- Combined ratings are determined using a rating table
 - For example, If a Veteran has a 50 percent disability and a 30 percent disability, the combined value will be found to be 70 percent

Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (VR&E)

VA's VR&E program helps Servicemembers and Veterans with service-connected disabilities and an employment handicap prepare for, find, and keep suitable careers through counseling and case management.

- For Veterans with a discharge under conditions other than dishonorable, at least a 20% disability rating, and an employment handicap (or a 10% rating with a serious employment handicap), VR&E provides:
 - Interest and aptitude testing, and career counseling
 - Job training, job-seeking skills, resume development, and work-readiness assistance
 - Special employer incentives, on-the-job-training, and non-paid work experiences
 - Post-secondary training at a college, vocational, technical or business school
 - Independent living services for individuals whose service-connected disabilities require intensive and frequent rehabilitation support to become more independent in their homes and communities

Electronic Resources

Disability Benefits Questionnaires:

https://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/dbq_disabilityexams.asp

VBA Forms: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/applying.asp>

38 CFR Part 4 Regulations:

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/38/part-4>

VBA Manual: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/warms/>

VA Compensation Rates:

<http://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/rates-index.asp>

Questions?

