

· Information Paper ·

U.S. Military Retirement/Separation Physical & Veterans Affairs (VA) Disability Process

(June 1, 2011)

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*** <u>Disclaimer</u> : For trained, expert advice contact your Claimant Representative or the VA. ***	

1. Overview.

· This **general** info is intended to help **YOU** obtain the **full [VA Disability Benefits](#)** you may be **entitled** to. It's mostly based on personal experience, highlighted in a few instances through the use of open sources to illustrate a point. The VA disability process may naturally seem foreign to you at first, perhaps even somewhat bizarre, but once you start living the process, the pieces will begin to fall into place--the online links in the e-version of this paper helps make process understanding much easier. This paper is continually updated with feedback from people like you! For more detailed information, there's an ample amount of VA-related publications currently available on the market.

· In most cases the process begins with your **service treatment records** (from the day you join) and what's written in them (and how **often**) to prove **chronic history**. ([Presumptive medical conditions](#) don't require your service treatment records--unless of course those records are needed to help prove your presence in a specific geographic location.) While in service, I heard many times to make sure you ***track those service-connected injuries***. It's true, but it's not that simple--repetitive entries over a minimum period of six months for treatment of ***chronic*** ailments or injuries is what the VA looks for. Attachment 2 (Establishing Service Connection) helps shed some light.

· Dealing with the VA after military service often requires a major shift in thinking. If your primary goal is to make a ***quick buck***, you can just about forget it. If for health reasons you're serious about pursuing VA Disability Benefits, **YOU** must be very **PROACTIVE** and **Patient** at the same time; ***Hurry-up and wait*** comes to mind. It's critical that you remain on top of what are strictly **YOUR** personal responsibilities in this process. In the end, only **YOU** can help **YOU**!

· **The Good News**: The gouge in this paper will give you an edge in the process long before your ***case file*** is assigned to a VA adjudicator. ***Are you ready?***

2. Prior to Your Retirement/Separation Physical Exam.

· Ensure any/all civilian medical records (while you were in service) are copied and officially merged into your service medical record. Contact your Base/Post Hospital for assistance. If you previously served in more than one Branch of Service, make sure you also obtain a copy of those medical records. You may also ask the VA to request them on your behalf--90-day average turnaround if you request, longer if the VA requests. **Military Medical & Health Records:** <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/medical-records.html>

· **[Your Choice]** Visit a doctor(s) for any/all of your **chronic** medical conditions prior to your retirement/separation physical exam. Doing this helps to establish another layer of **evidence** of a **chronic** condition(s)--it makes it harder for the VA to deny you disability later on for a particular medical condition when the words ***chronic _____*** are consistently entered in your records.

· For each medical condition ensure the doctor writes something like this: “First experienced this **chronic** condition of _____ in Month Year while in military service” (some examples in Atch 2). These small details now will later increase your chances of the VA awarding you the **full** disability ratings you **may be entitled to**. This **technique** also applies to your **Retirement/Separation Physical** (paragraphs 3&4) and **VA C&P Exam** (paragraph 7) as well as anytime you seek medical treatment. Thorough medical **evidence** now can save you significant time and stress later by helping you to avoid the VA appeals process. Believe it!

3. Military Retirement/Separation Physical.

· Ensure you're scheduled for a full physical exam work-up plus whatever else you want to be evaluated for; e.g. PTSD, hypertension, sleep apnea, back pain, etc. If necessary, **insist** on X-Rays, CTs, MRIs, EKGs, etc, if you believe it'll help a doctor diagnose any of your perceived **chronic** medical conditions. **Now** is the time to **request specific evaluations**--don't be bashful! Be thorough, **now!**

4. Post-Physical Exam Review / Consultation with Doctor.

· Prior to your visit with the military doctor (or even before your exam), consider creating a cross-reference product that lists all of your documented **chronic** medical conditions (ailments, injuries, etc.) (including dates), to bring with you when you see the doctor following your physical exam. Doing this saves a great deal of time when you and your doctor review your medical records **together**, and it greatly lessens the chance of something being missed that you wanted to discuss and have correctly entered on your [DD Form 2697 - Report of Medical Assessment](#). The VA gives a great deal of weight to the findings in this report (and C&P); it stands to reason you should too.

· Even though your doctor is the person who ultimately completes your DD Form 2697, you have a significant input! This is where having a comprehensive cross-reference list becomes invaluable! At the time, I created a MS Word document complete with medical conditions and associated dates--the doctor stamped it after we reviewed each medical condition on my list, and then he placed it into my medical record as an official medical document along with the DD Form 2697. (I have since created a MS Excel spreadsheet that I use for cross-referencing.)

- If you're truly feeling **Proactive**, read pertinent areas of the VA's [C&P Service Clinician's Guide \(March 2002\)](#), [Disability Examination Worksheets](#), and [USC Title 38, Part 4](#) (more on these later) to arm yourself with details and buzzwords the doctor can include on your **DD-2697 (and later for your C&P Exam)**. A properly written [DD-2697](#) lays a solid foundation for your [VA Form 21-526 - Application for Compensation and/or Pension](#). Remember, it's all about **YOU** protecting **YOU**!
- Now it's time to make two **(2) Copies** of your Medical Records: **(1) Member + (1) VA**. Page count between your medical records and both copies to ensure not a single page is missing--the troop copying my records at the base hospital **didn't** copy both sides of each page--luckily, I caught it.
- It's also helpful at this stage to number each page of your medical record copy (initially in pencil in case of error) and add the pertinent page numbers to your cross-reference product you previously created. Having a detailed cross-reference product greatly speeds up the process when your doctor needs to review entries in your medical records during your **C&P Exam**. You may also consider digitizing your medical records into a .PDF file; doing so allows you to carry your entire record on a USB flash drive when you visit the doctor. On one occasion, doing so saved the day for me.

5. VA Application for Compensation and/or Pension (C&P).

- The Pre-Discharge Program is a joint VA and Department of Defense program that affords service members the opportunity to file claims for disability [compensation](#) up to 180 days prior to separation or retirement from active duty or full time National Guard or Reserve duty (Title 10 and Title 32). Web: <http://www.vba.va.gov/predischarge/index.htm>.
- Many U.S. military bases/posts have a [Transition Service Officer \(TSO\)](#) who is chartered to help service members complete [VA Form 21-526](#), or [VA Form 21-526EZ](#) (VA's [Fully Developed Claims \(FDC\) Program](#)). You may also apply online using [VONAPP](#)--your **confirmed** time of receipt at VA is **NOW!** Vietnam War veterans should also see: [Agent Orange Fast Track Claims](#).
- Consider nominating a **National Service Officer (NSO) *Claimant Representative*** (advocate) from the [DAV](#), [VFW](#), etc., to represent you with your servicing VA Regional Office (VARO). The VA maintains a comprehensive list of [Veterans Service Organizations \(VSO\)](#).
- **Military Service Treatment Records** (and/or other military records) are used to help complete [VA 21-526](#) (or [-EZ](#)). **Be thorough!** As applicable, also ensure your **VA 21-526** (or [-EZ](#)) is appropriately stamped by the VA with "**Vietnam War Vet**", "**Persian Gulf War Vet**", etc. The VA is specially screening **Persian Gulf War Vets**--if eligible, contact your VARO for more info.
- Ensure that everything you want to, goes on your VA 21-526 (or [-EZ](#)). Some veterans, experienced with the VA's *older* way of doing things may advise you not to claim everything at one time; however, my NSO advocate advised me it's easier to manage a single claim--I followed his advice. **Hint:** Nominate a NSO Claimant Representative **before** you retire/separate!
- If applying by mail, *someone* (TSO, NSO, yourself, etc.) will mail your completed VA 21-526 (or [-EZ](#)), along with a copy of your **medical records** (and certified **DD-214(s)** when available), to the VA. Be sure to ask which **servicing** VARO your application is being mailed to--it's based on your post-service address. If using a Thai address or APO 96546 with the VA, [Pittsburgh](#) is your servicing VARO. The **C&P Exam** is structured to the medical condition(s) you claim on your VA 21-526 (or [-EZ](#)). Expect your **C&P Exam** to be scheduled in six months (or more) after applying--if it's scheduled earlier, great!

6. Prior to Your VA Compensation & Pension (C&P) Medical Exam.

- You have to prove a current medical condition exists; you incurred it during military service, and; you must show a causal relationship between in-service and the condition you're now claiming.
- **[Your Choice]** Visit a doctor(s) for any/all of your **chronic** medical conditions prior to your **C&P Medical Exam**. Doing this helps to establish another layer of **evidence** of a **chronic** condition(s), making it harder for the VA to deny you disability later on for a particular medical condition when the words ***chronic _____*** are consistently entered in your medical records. (Sound familiar?)
- As mentioned in paragraph 2, for each medical condition ensure the doctor writes something like this: "First experienced this **chronic** condition of _____ in Month Year while in military service" (some examples in Atch 2). These small details now will later increase your chances of the VA awarding you the **full** disability ratings you **deserve**. This **technique** also applies anytime you seek medical treatment. Thorough medical **evidence** now can save you significant time and stress later by helping you to avoid the VA appeals process. (See the trend!)
- As mentioned in paragraph 4, consider creating a cross-reference product listing all of your documented **chronic** medical conditions (ailments, injuries, etc., including dates), to bring with you to your **C&P Exam**. Doing this saves a great deal of time when you and your doctor review your medical records **together**, and it greatly lessens the chance of something being missed that you wanted to discuss and have correctly entered in your **C&P Exam Report**. (It stands to reason that you're not helping yourself if you simply dump a pile of loose records on your doctor or the VA.)
- At sometime between your **Disability Application** and your **C&P Exam** the VA will send you correspondence asking if you wish to add any **new evidence** to your claim--e.g. **New treatment records, Witness Statements** (from people who see you daily--family, friends, co-workers), **Photographs, Personal Statements** (via letter or [VA 21-4138 - Statement in Support of Claim](#)), etc.
- **Retiring/Residing Overseas:** Veterans residing in certain **overseas** areas (e.g. Thailand), and using an overseas address (local or APO/FPO/DPO), are processed by [Pittsburgh VARO](#), unless you coordinate with the VA otherwise. Veterans living in the Philippines are fortunate to have their own VARO. Likewise, if you desire a **VA C&P Medical Exam** at a stateside VA facility, be sure to request that well in advance with your **servicing VARO**. (This is another example of when having a **Claimant Representative** to advise and assist you becomes invaluable, especially when you live thousands of miles from your servicing VARO. Ultimately though, nominating a **Claimant Representative** and asking them to assist you is strictly your decision to make.) VA Disability Claims Process for Veterans Living Abroad: <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Foreign/process.htm>.

7. VA C&P Medical Exam. (See Attachments 1 & 2 for more information.)

- Stateside, VA **schedules** you for a **C&P Medical Exam** (to prove **service-connection**) and notifies you at the address you gave them. Your exam appointment may arrive quickly or it may be up to several months later. I had my **C&P Exam** at a civilian hospital in Bangkok 2½ months after my official retirement date. I was contacted via letter by American Citizen Services (ACS, U.S. Embassy) who, by my request, recommended a local hospital/doctor for me. After I researched, then approved the choice, ACS sent to my examining doctor the VA's applicable **exam protocol** from the [C&P Service Clinician's Guide \(March 2002\)](#) and [Disability Examination Worksheets](#). My doctor followed the protocols to conduct the exam and write the **C&P Exam Report** (see Atchs 1 & 2).

· Four months later (nowadays it can take much longer) I received my **Disability Rating Decision**--certain conditions were awarded disability, others denied--over 5 years later I continue to submit **new and material evidence**: Medical Reports, Witness Statements, Photographs and [VA 21-4138s](#).

Note: In most cases bring a hardcopy of your treatment records if your C&P Exam is at an overseas civilian facility. If you're examined at a VA facility bringing your copy is also a good idea to ensure something isn't missed. Recommend you also bring the applicable [Disability Examination Worksheet](#) to your C&P Exam. It's all about checks and balances to protect **YOUR** interests.

· **BE HONEST WITH YOUR EXAMINING DOCTOR!!!** For example: If you're claiming chronic knee or back pain, and you're well-tanned (indicative of outdoor activity), the examining doctor may ask something seemingly benign like, "Are you enjoying golf more, now that you're retired?"¹ Don't be surprised at the question, and most importantly, be **truthful** with your answer! Frivolous claims slow the disability claims process and directly hurt the honest Veterans who desperately need a timely award of disability benefits.

· If you're having a stateside **C&P Exam**, your doctor submits a report of the findings to your servicing VARO that is going to adjudicate your claim. Overseas at a civilian hospital, ask your doctor to give you the original signature report, or ask the doctor to send it to ACS. Some doctors will procedurally (by default) send it to ACS. I submitted my **C&P Exam Report** directly to my [DAV advocate in Pittsburgh](#) via certified mail. Also, ACS will send your C&P Examination Report to the VA via the trackable pouch from the Embassy...free.

· **VA gives a great deal of weight to the findings in this report**; it stands to reason you should too.

8. Rating Decision.

· The VA will notify you in writing of their **Disability Rating Decision**. The VA uses [USC Title 38, Part 4](#) to award disability ratings--it behooves you to become familiar with these *before* your exam.

Note: The *Appeals Process* begins when you disagree with any part of the VA's rating decision. While the VA gives you **one year** from the date of the rating decision letter to file a **Notice of Disagreement** (NOD), don't delay or forget! A **NOD** is a simple letter to the VA stating you disagree with their rating decision; e.g. "I disagree with the VA's decision denying service-connection for my Right Knee Condition." Concurrently, you may request a "*De Novo*" review. A *de novo* review is far easier and timelier than pursuing a formal appeal. A *de novo* review is a new and complete review of the appealed issue with no deference given to the decision being appealed. This review leads to a new decision, which may be a full grant, partial grant, clear and unmistakable error, or no change ([M21-1MR](#), pg 5-C-11). A claimant may not have more than one review under this section of the same decision ([38 CFR 3.2600](#)). Main Thing: Closely read all VA correspondence taking careful note of suspense dates in order to **preserve your right to appeal**.

9. Conclusion.

· Your **health** is the most **important** aspect of your life once you complete your **service obligation**. Convincing VA adjudicators--by precisely following their rules--to be awarded the **full** disability **BENEFITS** you may be **ENTITLED** to is crucial! I hope this paper helps you do exactly that!

Attachment 1

VA Compensation & Pension (C&P) Examination

· **Any hospital/licensed doctor** technically can administer the exam--you just have to ask them--there is no formal VA certification or qualification program for foreign civilian providers in Thailand. When I received my **exam notification** (from the VA through the U.S. Embassy) I was a brand new expatriate to Thailand. And, while I had previously done my due diligence on basic health care availability (incl. TRICARE and VA health care benefits) before I moved to Thailand, I had not yet had a specific need to visit a local medical care provider. Therefore, I called the ACS POC in the notification letter and she set up my exam with a local international hospital in Bangkok. **Note:** Take close notice of any time suspense from the VA for you to complete your **C&P Exam**.

· I've used the same hospital ever since for almost all my entire medical needs--patient familiarity ***aids the process***, therefore, you may consider choosing a provider you wish to establish a long-term relationship with should it subsequently become necessary to appeal a rating decision(s).

· You should get all of your **ducks lined up** before you make the appointment. I was [mostly] prepared when I received a surprise phone call from my exam doctor telling me she'll see me in less than 2 days. **Crikey!** (That doctor has since declined administering any new VA exams).

· When I've explained to Thai medical providers what the VA is and what I'm pursuing, I frame it in terms of ***government medical insurance*** for injured military veterans. I tell my doctors if the VA accepts my claim, I receive 100% medical care for that **service-connected medical condition**, if not, I have expensive co-pays and deductibles with my normal military medical ***insurance*** (TRICARE). If there's an easier or better way of explaining the VA to Thai doctors, I'm all ears.

· Your **PCM** (Primary Care Manager) will conduct the overall **C&P Exam**, but they **should** have **specialists** evaluate you, as needed. If you feel your examining doctor should refer you for a consultation with a specialist, but hasn't, first **POLITELY** ask him/her to do so. Remember, **First Impressions!** Immediate impressions will likely be recorded and used in the decision process to **award** or **deny** you disability benefits.

· Be sure to do some prep work for your exam, such as writing down any/all questions and bringing those with you--also consider bringing a friend along to ***help*** you remember, especially if you're already experiencing memory challenges. Further, consider researching and preparing supporting information from [The National Institutes of Health](#), [Institute of Medicine](#), medical journals, etc., and asking your doctor to include it as part of their Exam Report. What's also **absolutely critical** is how your ***disabilities*** **impact** your **daily life**, so be sure to prepare/state in your own words, and share that with your PCM/specialists, and also make sure that gouge makes it into your final report. **Some examples:** Difficulty walking up stairs because of pain in both knees; Difficulty sleeping due to back pain; Difficulty turning my head to the left when driving a car, etc. Are you ***worn out*** due to pain? That's an important detail. Do you experience side effects from treatment or medication?² Do you know someone with the same medical condition? They may have helpful advice ... Ask!

· It helps to **page number** your **medical records** and **cross-reference** your medical conditions to the corresponding pages--I built and use an MS Excel Spreadsheet. You may also extract/copy applicable pages from your medical records for each particular medical condition--that's my current technique for when I see my doctors--saves the time and hassle of tabbing each applicable page and thumbing through the entire record. I also carry my service (and civilian) medical record on a USB flash drive should it become necessary to clarify an issue. In one instance, a medical report went missing from my civilian record--I printed a replacement copy on the spot and gave it to my doctor.

· Moreover, you may consider *drafting* the **C&P Medical Exam Report** before your exam(s). The [Disability Examination Worksheets](#) you read about earlier **ARE** the C&P Exam Reports once your doctor completes and signs it. Personally, I prepare a draft exam report before each C&P, and I bring it with me on a flash drive to the examination. After my doctor reviews my medical history and conducts the exam, the doctor (or staff) fills in each report with the exam results, and then the doctor signs it--I then submit the report(s) to the VA through my NSO advocate who in-turn submits it to the VA. (I ask my advocate to review all documents before submitting.)

· The overall point is, whatever your level of **self-initiative**, it behooves you to **not** let your **C&P Medical Exam Report** (or any subsequent reports) leave the doctor's office without you first **reviewing** it, and requesting **revision** if needed (**be polite**--some doctors are sensitive to being asked to make changes!), and getting a copy for yourself (**keep a copy of everything you submit!**). The **C&P Exam FOREVER** sets the initial tone and level of success with the VA. **First Impressions!**

Attachment 2

Establishing Service Connection

1. What the VA needs to establish service connection is each of the three following items:
 - a. A clear diagnosis of a condition.
 - b. A medical nexus providing a link to military service.
 - (1) All that is required is a determination as to whether it is likely that the condition could be linked to service or to a service-connected disability.
 - (2) The Veterans Administration is not trying to attach responsibility to a doctor--they are simply trying to get a medical opinion.
 - c. Proof of an in-service occurrence.
2. According to VA legal precedent, the phrase “**at least as likely as not**” does not mean “within the realm of medical possibility.” Rather, it means that the weight of medical evidence both for and against a conclusion is so evenly divided that it is as medically sound to find in favor of causation as it is to find against causation.
3. You must of course have a doctor to state that they have reviewed the service medical records and that it is their medical opinion that the conditions you suffer from today are due to injuries sustained in service. When asked to give an opinion as to whether a condition is related to a specific incident during military service, the opinion should be expressed as follows ([Clinician’s Guide](#), para 1.16):

“**is due to**” (100% sure)

“**more likely than not**” (greater than 50%)

“**at least as likely as not**” (equal to or greater than 50%)

Examples:

1. I have been treating Mr./Ms. _____ for a xxxxxxx condition. After careful review of the veteran's service medical records, it is my professional medical opinion that the condition stated above is more likely than not caused by the incidents which occurred in service. I base my opinion on this because: _____.
2. I have reviewed Mr./Ms. _____ veteran's service medical records and the current treatment records, and it is my opinion that “**it is at least as likely as not**” (or “**it is more likely than not**”) that the veteran’s xxxxxxx condition is related to his/her military duty. Whereas, I see that he/she was treated on dates of treatment for xxxxxxx condition. I base my opinion on this because: _____.
3. I have reviewed Mr./Ms. _____ current treatment records and it is my opinion that “**it is more likely than not**” (or “**it is at least as likely as not**”) that the veteran’s xxxxxxx condition is secondary and/or aggravated by the veterans service connected xxxxxxx condition. I base my opinion on this because: _____.

These are primary examples of what is needed in order to secure service connection for a disability from service.

Attachment 3

More Hints, Tidbits & Spelled-Out Web Links

- **File Management.** Keep a GOOD copy of EVERYTHING you submit *and* receive! Personally, I maintain two files: One (1) Electronic file on the computer (backed-up of course!); and One (1) Paper file I keep in a three-ring binder. Whatever your preferred method, be thorough and be diligent about file upkeep. I speak from experience when I say detailed file management is essential.
- **Informal Claim.** Time is money! The VA dates a claim on the date it's received by them. There are some exceptions as in one year from ReLAD (Release from Active Duty) or death for survivors, and in some cases, even further back based on VA presumptive conditions. The bulk of U.S. military veterans in Thailand are Vietnam Veterans who suddenly pop positive for something. For every month they wait trying to get a DD-214 or STRs (Service Treatment Record), or anything else, they lose a month of compensation. An *INFORMAL* claim can be submitted on [VA 21-4138](#) or even a tissue. Real Basic: *"My name is John Q. Public, SSN 123-45-6789. I am a 'boots on the ground' Vietnam veteran. I have been diagnosed with Diabetes Type-II and am claiming service-connected disability. My address is xxxx, and phone number is xxxxx."*
- **Subsequent Claims.** Veterans submit subsequent claims using a variety of documents, including letters or [VA Form 21-4138](#), that serve many other purposes. VA has developed [VA Form 21-526b - Veteran's Supplemental Claim](#) (available in [VONAPP](#)) to enhance clarity and consistency in processing subsequent claims. This new form more clearly describes information needed to support claims when seeking increased benefits for conditions already service-connected by the VA.
- **Submitting Evidence.** Place your full Name, SSN and VA File # (if already assigned one) in the upper right hand corner of each and every piece of evidence you submit to the VA.
- **Delivery Methods.** There are several tried and true methods for submitting evidence to the VA, including using a combination of methods to ensure the VA can't say "we didn't receive it" or "we didn't receive it within the allotted time." Sign your documents and get them to the VA:
 - **To Claimant Representative or VA:** Fax, Certified/Express Mail, FedEx, DHL, UPS, etc.
 - **To VA only:** [IRIS](#) message. (Note: [IRIS](#) is information only--attachments are prohibited.)
 - **Example:** Fax to Pittsburgh VARO (412-395-6091 or 6057) works well with a follow-up message to Pittsburgh through [IRIS](#) (gives you proof of submission--print hardcopy or PDF).
 - If it's the 28th of the month, snail-mail will cost you a month of compensation if the VA doesn't claim they lost it. You now have one year from the informal date to make it *FORMAL* and your clock started ticking with your Fax--and, if awarded 10% or greater disability, you'll be paid retroactively back to that date. Further, [CRSC](#) (Combat-Related Special Compensation) should not be overlooked in the case of military retirees--it too must be applied for.
- **[Foreign Medical Program \(Medical Treatment\)](#).** No doubt, you'll need medical attention for the medical condition(s) on your claim until such time the VA approves it--perhaps a year or more. If you save your medical receipts, you can submit them to the Foreign Medical Program (FMP) back to

the date you filed; formal or informal, once your claim is approved for service-connection. (FMP will pay travel, lodging and meals for a C&P Exam.) **FMP Handbook:** <http://tinyurl.com/35fdqnv>.
Timely Filing of Claims: <http://www.va.gov/hac/forbeneficiaries/fmp/policymanual/index.asp>.

• **Veterans Service Organizations (VSO).** I earlier mentioned using the DAV in Pittsburgh VARO as my Claimant Representative. To clarify and expound further, as VSOs go, only the VFW has service officers (non-accredited) in Thailand. To some Veterans it makes a big difference to be able to sit one-on-one with someone when they have no conceptual idea of where to begin. Nothing prevents you from seeking assistance from the VFW in Thailand, and then requesting the DAV to be your Claimant Representative in Pittsburgh VARO. Who you ask to help you, if you ask anyone at all, is strictly your decision to make. **Veterans Service Organizations:** <http://www.va.gov/VSO/>.

• **Disabled American Veterans (DAV) - Pittsburgh, PA Office** •

Disabled American Veterans	Phone: (412) 395-6241
VA Regional Office, Rm 1606	Fax: (412) 391-3085
1000 Liberty Avenue	Email: DAVForeign.vbapit@va.gov
Pittsburgh, PA 15222	Client Hours: M-T-Th-F, 0730-1630 & W, 0730-1130 (E.T.)

- Agent Orange - Exposure During Military Service (incl. [Thailand Military Bases](#), [Blue Water Veterans](#), [Korean DMZ](#), [Tests/Storage](#)): <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/militaryexposure.asp>
- Agent Orange - Fast Track Claim: <https://fasttrack.va.gov/>
- C&P Service Clinician's Guide (March 2002): <http://tinyurl.com/23nx87c>
- Disability Examination Worksheets: <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Benefits/exams/index.htm>
- Disabled American Veterans (DAV): <http://www.dav.org/>
- FAQs - VA Foreign Services Program: <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Foreign/forfaq.htm>
- Gulf War - Infectious Diseases: http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/infectious_diseases.asp
- Foreign Medical Program (FMP): <http://www4.va.gov/hac/forbeneficiaries/fmp/fmp.asp>
- Inquiry Routing & Information System (IRIS): <https://iris.custhelp.com/>
- Institute of Medicine: <http://www.iom.edu/>
- The National Institutes of Health: <http://health.nih.gov/>
- Pittsburgh VARO: <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/facility.asp?ID=315>
- USC Title 38, Part 4: <http://www.benefits.va.gov/warms/bookc.asp>
- VAnguard (VA Magazine): <http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/vanguard.asp>
- VAntage Point (VA Blog): <http://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/>
- VA Disability Benefits: <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/index.htm>
- VA Fully Developed Claims (FDC): <http://www.vba.va.gov/fastclaims/>
- VA Form 21-22 - Power Of Attorney: <http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-22-ARE.pdf>
- VA Form 21-526 - Application for Compensation and/or Pension: <http://tinyurl.com/6txqpg>
- VA Form 21-526b - Veteran's Supplemental Claim for Compensation: <http://tinyurl.com/321xszc>
- VA Form 21-526EZ - Fully Developed Claim (Compensation): <http://tinyurl.com/2eaxz6d>
- VA Form 21-4138 - Statement in Support of Claim: <http://tinyurl.com/yajgbea>
- VA Medical Facilities: <http://www.va.gov/health/MedicalCenters.asp>
- Veterans On-Line Application (VONAPP): <http://tinyurl.com/3rho98z>

Attachment 4

Other VA & Health-Related Resources

eBenefits

<https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/>

Gulf War Veterans' Health Initiative

<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/vethealthinitiative/gulfwar.asp>

My HealtheVet

<http://www.myhealth.va.gov/>

National Gulf War Research Center

<http://www.ngwrc.org/>

Returning Service Members (OEF/OIF)

<http://www.oefoif.va.gov/>

The A to Z Guide to VA Disability Benefits

<http://jimstrickland912.com/>

Title 38 - Pensions, Bonuses, and Veterans' Relief (Schedule for Rating Disabilities)

http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title38/38cfr4_main_02.tpl

VA Homepage

<http://www.va.gov/>

VA Office of Public Health & Environmental Hazards - Hazardous Exposures

<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/index.asp>

^{1,2} **VA Watchdog dot Org**

<http://www.vawatchdog.org/>

Veterans Benefits Administration

<http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA/>

Veterans Information

<http://www.veteransinfo.org/>

Vetshome

<http://www.vetshome.com/>

What To Do When Filing A Claim with the VA

<http://www.jerebeery.com/va%20assistance%20banner.htm>