

Requirement of Standardized Claim, Appeal Forms

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Requirement of Standardized Claim, Appeal Forms Simplifies Application Process for Veterans

Washington – With the goal of making the application process easier and more efficient for our Veterans, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) now requires Veterans seeking disability benefits to use standardized claim and appeal forms. These standardized forms guide Veterans to clearly state the symptoms or conditions for which they are seeking benefits and provide the information necessary for VA to start processing their claims and appeals.

“This change will help VA provide faster and more accurate decisions to our Veterans, their families and survivors,” said Under Secretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey. “Standard forms are essential to better serve Veterans, build more efficiency into VA’s processes and bring us in line with other government agencies such as the Social Security Administration.”

The easiest and fastest way for a Veteran to submit an application for compensation is online through the eBenefits (www.ebenefits.va.gov) portal. **VA encourages Veterans to work with representatives of Veterans Service Organization (VSO), or their state or county representatives, who can assist with filing electronically or in paper form.** Standardized forms are a key component of VA’s transformation, which will help achieve the Department’s goal to eliminate the backlog by the end of this year.

There are two claim actions that now require standardized forms:

1. Veterans’ or Survivors’ applications for disability compensation or pension – Specific forms are designed to capture information necessary to identify and support benefit claims.

- Veterans filing for disability benefits must now use [VA Form 21-526EZ](#), *Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits*.
- Wartime Veterans filing for needs-based pension must use [VA Form 21-527EZ](#), *Application for Pension*.
- Survivors filing a claim for dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC), survivor’s pension, and accrued benefits must complete [VA Form 21-534EZ](#), *Application for DIC, Death Pension, and/or Accrued Benefits*.

2. Notices of Disagreement with any aspect of VA’s decision on a disability claim – The standardized Notice of Disagreement form is used when a claimant wishes to initiate an appeal.

- Veterans disagreeing with a VA compensation decision should use [VA Form 21-0958](#), *Notice of Disagreement*.
- Veterans and survivors will not be required to use a standardized notice of disagreement form to initiate appeals of pension or survivors benefit decisions at this time.

VA recognizes that some Veterans may need additional time to gather all of the information and evidence needed to support their claim and therefore established a new *intent to file* a claim process. Applicants may notify VA of their *intent to file* a claim in order to establish the earliest possible effective date for benefits if they are determined eligible. An *intent to file* a claim may be submitted in one of three ways:

1. Electronically via [eBenefits](#) or with the support of a Veterans Service Organization (VSO) through the Stakeholder Enterprise Portal.
2. Completing and mailing a paper VA Form 21-0966, *Intent to File a Claim for Compensation and/or Pension, or Survivors Pension and/or DIC*
3. Over the phone with a VA call center or in person with a public contact representative.

Veterans may appoint a duly authorized representative, such as a VSO, who can notify VA of a claimant’s intent to file using any of the methods listed above. VA will provide an individual up to one year from the date they submit their *intent to file* a claim to complete the required application form. Veterans may wish to use this one-year period to gather evidence necessary to support the claim so that evidence can be submitted along with the application form.

VA’s move to standardized claim and appeal forms will make the process easier and more efficient for both VA and the Veterans, and allow VA to establish a quicker, more streamlined benefits delivery system.