

More Information on FDC Evidence & Criteria

Need to know more about necessary evidence? Be sure to carefully read the information on this page as you prepare to submit your claim for benefits.

Notice to Veteran of Evidence Necessary to Substantiate a Claim for Veterans Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits

The following links enable you to view data charts that provide detailed information about evidence requirements for the FDC and standard claim processes.

Additional Resources

[Get more information on the FDC Program](#)

[Get more information on VA Benefits](#)

[Find VA forms](#)

[View FAQs, ask a question, get more information](#)

[Call us toll-free at 1-800-827-1000 FREE \(711 if you use a TDD\)](#)

1. Submit the following simultaneously with your claim:

All, if any, relevant, private medical treatment records; AND

An identification of any relevant treatment records available at a Federal facility, such as a VA medical center.

Special Circumstances

Under the special circumstances shown below, you must also submit the following simultaneously with your claim:

For National Guard and Reserve members, any and all Service Treatment and Personnel Records in the custody of your Unit(s).

If claiming dependents, a completed VA Form 21-686c, Declaration of Status of Dependents. If claiming a child in school between the ages of 18 and 23, you must also submit a completed VA Form 21-674, Request for Approval of School Attendance. If claiming benefits for a seriously disabled (helpless) child, you must also submit all, relevant, private medical treatment records pertaining to the child's pertinent disabilities.

If claiming Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a completed VA Form 21-0781, Statement in Support of Claim for Service Connection for Post-Traumatic Disorder; or If claiming PTSD based on personal assault, a completed VA Form 21-0781a, Statement in Support of Claim for Service Connection for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Secondary to Personal Assault.

If claiming Individual Unemployability, a completed VA Form 21-8940, Veteran's Application for Increased Compensation Based on Unemployability, and a completed VA Form 21-4192, Request for Employment Information in Connection with Claim for Disability Benefits.

If claiming Specially Adapted Housing or Home Adaptation, a completed VA Form 26-4555, Application in Acquiring Specially Adapted Housing or Special Home Adaptation Grant.

If claiming Auto Allowance, a completed VA Form 21-4502, Application for Automobile or Other Conveyance and Adaptive Equipment.

If claiming additional benefits because you or your spouse require Aid and Attendance, a completed VA Form 21-2680, Examination for Housebound Status or Permanent Need for Regular Aid and Attendance; or if claiming Aid and Attendance based on being a patient in a nursing home, a VA Form 21-0779, Request for Nursing Home Information in Connection with Claim for Aid and Attendance.

2. Report for any VA medical examinations that VA determines are necessary to decide your claim.

The Fully Developed Claim (FDC) Program is the fastest way to get your claim processed, and there is no risk to participate! Participation in the FDC Program is optional and will not affect the quality of care you receive or the benefits to which you are entitled. If you file a claim in the FDC Program and it is determined that other records exist and VA needs the records to decide your claim, then VA will simply remove the claim from the FDC Program (Optional Expedited Process) and process it in the Standard Claim Process. See below for more information. If you wish to file your claim in the FDC Program, see FDC Program (Optional Expedited Process). If you wish to file your claim under the process in which VA traditionally processes claims, see Standard Claim Process.

You must submit all relevant evidence in your possession and provide the VA information sufficient to enable it to obtain all relevant evidence not in your possession. If your claim involves a disability that you had before entering service and that was made worse by service, please provide any information or evidence in your possession regarding the health condition that existed before your entry into service.

IMPORTANT: If you are filing your claim prior to or within one year of your separation from the military, you'll need to provide a certified copy of your DD Form 214, "Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty" as early as possible following your separation. This may help to expedite the completion of your claim.

You must submit your claim in accordance with the "FDC Criteria." (See the expandable section above.)

You must:

If you know of evidence not in your possession and want VA to try to get it for you, give VA enough information about the evidence so that we can request it from the person or agency that has it.

If the holder of the evidence declines to give it to VA, asks for a fee to provide it, or otherwise cannot get the evidence, VA will notify you and provide you with an opportunity to submit the information or evidence. It is your responsibility to make sure we receive all requested records that are not in the possession of a federal department or agency.

What you need to do table

| FDC Program (Optional Expedited Process) | Standard Claim Process |
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| <p>You must submit your claim in accordance with the "FDC Criteria." (See the expandable section above.)</p> | <p>You must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you know of evidence not in your possession and want VA to try to get it for you, give VA enough information about the evidence so that we can request it from the person or agency that has it. • If the holder of the evidence declines to give it to VA, asks for a fee to provide it, or otherwise cannot get the evidence, VA will notify you and provide you with an opportunity to submit the information or evidence. It is your responsibility to make sure we receive all requested records that |

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| | are not in the possession of a federal department or agency. |
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How VA will help you obtain evidence for your claim:

| FDC Program (Optional Expedited Process) | Standard Claim Process |
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| <p>VA will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retrieve medical records from a Federal facility, such as a VA medical center, that you adequately identify and authorize VA to obtain. • Provide a medical examination for you, or get a medical opinion, if we determine that it is necessary to decide your claim. | <p>VA will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retrieve relevant records from a Federal facility such as a VA medical center, that you adequately identify and authorize VA to obtain. • Provide a medical examination for you, or get a medical opinion, if we determine that it is necessary to decide your claim. • Make every reasonable effort to obtain relevant records not held by a Federal facility that you adequately identify and authorize VA to obtain. These may include records from State or local governments and privately held evidence and information that you tell us about, such as private doctor or hospital records from current or former employers. |

When you should send your information evidence:

| FDC Program (Optional Expedited Process) | Standard Claim Process |
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| <p>You must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send the information and evidence simultaneously with your claim. <p>If you submit additional information or evidence after you submit your "fully developed" claim, then VA will remove the claim from the FDC Program Expedited</p> | <p>You must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send the information or evidence as soon as you can. <p>You have up to one year from the date we receive the claim to submit the information and evidence necessary to support your claim. If we decide the claim before one year from</p> |

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| Process and process it in the Standard Claim Process. If we decide your claim before one year from the date we receive the claim, you will still have the remainder of the one-year period to submit additional information or evidence necessary to support the claim. | the date we receive the claim, you will still have the remainder of the one-year period to submit additional information or evidence necessary to support the claim. |
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Where to send your information and evidence:

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| <p>To submit supporting information or evidence simultaneously with your claim, upload the documentation with this application. Later in this application process, we will provide you instructions on how to upload documentation.</p> <p>You may also fax, mail, or take any information or evidence in support of your claim to the closest VA regional office. VA regional office information is available on the Internet at www.va.gov/directory.</p> |
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What the evidence that you provide must show to support your claim:

| If you are claiming... | See the evidence table titled... |
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| You have a disability that was caused or aggravated by your service. | Disability Service Connection |
| Your service connected disability caused or aggravated an additional disability. | Secondary Service Connection |
| Your service connected disability has worsened. | Increased Disability Compensation |
| Your service connected disability caused you to be hospitalized or to undergo surgery or other treatment. | Temporary Total Disability Rating |
| Your service connected disability(ies) prevents you from getting or keeping substantial employment. | Individual Unemployability |
| You have a disability caused or aggravated by VA medical treatment, vocational rehabilitation, or compensated work therapy. | Compensation Under 38 U.S.C. 1151 |
| Your service connected disability(ies) causes you to be in need of aid and attendance or to be confined to your residence. | Special Monthly Compensation |
| If you are claiming benefits... | If you are claiming benefits... |
| For adapting and/or purchasing a residence | Special Adapted Housing or Special Home Adaptation |

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| For adapting and/or purchasing a vehicle | Auto Allowance |
| Because your spouse is severely disabled | Special Monthly Compensation |
| Because your child is severely disabled | Helpless Child |

Evidence Tables

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| <p>Disability Service Connection</p> <p>To support a claim for service connection, the evidence must show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You had an injury in service, or a disease that began in or was made permanently worse during service, or there was an event in service that caused an injury or disease; AND • You have a current physical or mental disability. This may be shown by medical evidence or by lay evidence of persistent and recurrent symptoms of disability that are visible or observable; AND • A relationship exists between your current disability and an injury, disease, symptoms, or event in service. This may be shown by medical records or medical opinions or, in certain cases, by lay evidence. However, under certain circumstances, VA may presume that certain current disabilities were caused by service, even if there is no specific evidenced proving this in your particular claim. The cause of a disability is presumed for the following veterans who have certain diseases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Former prisoners of war; ○ Veterans who have certain chronic or tropical diseases that become evident within a specific period of time after discharge from service; ○ Veterans who were exposed to ionizing radiation, mustard gas, or Lewisite while in service; ○ Veterans who served in the Southwest Asia theater of operations during the Gulf War. <p>To support a claim for service connection based upon a period of active duty for training, the evidence must show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ You were disabled during active duty for training due to disease or injury incurred or aggravated in the line of duty; AND ▪ You have a current physical or mental disability. This may be shown by medical evidence or by lay evidence of persistent and recurrent symptoms of disability that are visible or observable; AND ▪ There is a relationship between your current disability and the disease or injury incurred or aggravated during active duty for training. This may be shown by medical records or medical opinions or, in certain cases, by lay evidence. <p>To support a claim for service connection based upon a period of inactive duty training, the evidence must show:</p> |
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- You were disabled during inactive duty training due to an injury incurred or aggravated in the line of duty or an acute myocardial infarction, cardiac arrest, or cerebrovascular accident during inactive duty training; **AND**
- You have a current physical or mental disability. This may be shown by medical evidence or by lay evidence of persistent and recurrent symptoms of disability that are visible and observable; **AND**
- There is a relationship between your current disability and your inactive duty training. This may be shown by medical records or medical opinions or, in certain cases, by lay evidence.

In order to **reopen a claim previously denied** by VA, we need new and material evidence. New and material evidence must raise a reasonable possibility of substantiating your claim. The evidence cannot simply be repetitive or cumulative of the evidence we had when we previously decided your claim. VA will make reasonable efforts to help you obtain currently existing evidence. However, we cannot provide a medical examination or obtain a medical opinion until your claim is successfully reopened.

- To qualify as new, the evidence must currently exist and be submitted to VA For the first time.
- In order to be considered material, the additional existing evidence must pertain to the reason your claim was previously denied.

Secondary Service Connection

To support a claim for **compensation based upon an additional disability** that was caused or aggravated by a service-connected disability, the evidence must show:

- You currently have a physical or mental disability shown by medical evidence or by lay evidence of persistent and recurrent symptoms of disability that are visible or observable, in addition to your service-connected disability; **AND**
- Your service-connected disability either caused or aggravated your additional disability. This may be shown by medical records or medical opinions or, in certain cases, by lay evidence. However, VA may presume service-connection for cardiovascular disease developing in a claimant with a certain service-connected amputation(s) of one or both lower extremities.

Increased Disability Compensation

If VA previously granted service connection for your disability and you are seeking an increased evaluation of your service-connected disability, we need medical or lay evidence to show a worsening or increase in severity and the effect that worsening or increase has on your ability to work.

Temporary Total Disability Rating

In order to support a claim for a **temporary total disability rating due to hospitalization**, the evidence must show:

- You were treated for more than 21 days for a service-connected disability at a VA or other approved hospital; **OR**
- You underwent hospital observation at VA expense for a service-connected disability for more than 21 days.

In order to support a claim for a **temporary total disability rating due to surgical or other treatment** performed by a VA or other approved hospital or outpatient facility, the evidence must show:

- The surgery or treatment was for a service-connected disability; **AND**
- The surgery required convalescence of at least one month; **OR**
- The surgery resulted in severe postoperative residuals, such as incompletely healed surgical wounds, stumps of recent amputations, therapeutic immobilizations, house confinement, or the required use of a wheelchair or crutches; **OR**
- One major joint or more was immobilized by a cast without surgery.

Individual Unemployability

In order to support a claim for a **temporary total disability rating based on individual unemployability**, the evidence must show:

- That your service-connected disability or disabilities are sufficient, without regard to other factors, to prevent you from performing the mental and/or physical tasks required to get or keep substantially gainful employment; **AND**
- Generally, you meet certain disability percentage requirements as specified in 38 Code of Federal Regulations 4.16 (i.e., one disability ratable at 60 percent or more, **OR** more than one disability with one disability ratable at 40 percent or more and a combined rating of 70 percent or more).

In order to support a claim for an extra-schedular evaluation based on exceptional circumstances, the evidence must show:

- That your service-connected disability or disabilities present such an exceptional or unusual disability picture, due to such factors as marked interference with employment or frequent periods of hospitalization, that application of the regular schedular standards is impractical.

Compensation Under 38 U.S.C. 1151

In order to support a claim for **compensation under 38 U.S.C. 1151**, the evidence must show that, as a result of VA hospitalization, medical or surgical treatment, examination, or training, you have:

- An additional disability or disabilities; **OR**
- An aggravation of an existing injury or disease; **AND**
- The disability was the direct result of VA fault such as carelessness, negligence, lack of proper skill, or error in judgment, or not a reasonably expected result or complication of the VA care or treatment; **OR**
- The direct result of participation in a VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment or compensated work therapy program.

Special Monthly Compensation

In order to support a claim for **increased benefits based on the need for aid and attendance**, the evidence must show that, due to your service-connected disability or disabilities:

- You require the aid of another person in order to perform personal functions required in everyday living, such as bathing, feeding, dressing yourself, attending to the wants of nature, adjusting prosthetic devices, or protecting yourself from the hazards of your daily environment (38 Code of Federal Regulation 3.352(a)); **OR**
- You are bedridden, in that your disability or disabilities require that you remain in bed apart from any prescribed course of convalescence or treatment (38 Code of Federal Regulation 3.352(a)).

In order to support a claim for **increased benefits based on an additional disability or being housebound**, the evidence must show:

- You have a single service-connected disability evaluated as 100 percent disabling **AND** an additional service-connected disability, or disabilities, evaluated as 60 percent or more disabling; **OR**
- You have a single service-connected disability evaluated as 100 percent disabling **AND**, due solely to your service-connected disability or disabilities, you are permanently and substantially confined to your immediate premises.

In order to support a claim for **increased benefits based on your spouse's need for aid and attendance**, per the provisions of 38 C.F.R. § 3.351©, the evidence must show:

- Your spouse is blind or so nearly blind as to have corrected visual acuity of 5/200 or less, in both eyes, or concentric contraction of the visual field to 5 degrees or less; **OR**
- Your spouse is a patient in a nursing home because of mental or physical incapacity; **OR**
- Your spouse requires the aid of another person in order to perform personal functions required in everyday living, such as bathing, feeding, dressing, attending to the wants of nature, adjusting prosthetic devices, or protecting him or her from the hazards of his or her daily environment. (See 38 C.F.R. § 3.352(a) for a complete explanation.)

IMPORTANT: For additional benefits to be payable for a spouse, the veteran must be entitled to compensation and evaluated as 30 percent or more disabling.

Specially Adapted Housing or Special Home Adaptation

To support your claim for **specially adapted housing (SAH)**, the evidence must show you are a:

- Veteran entitled to compensation under 38 U.S.C. Chapter 11 for a permanent and totally disabling qualifying condition; **OR**
- Service member on active duty who has a permanent and totally disabling qualifying condition incurred or aggravated in the line of duty.

To support that you have a **qualifying condition for SAH**, the evidence must show:

- Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS); **OR**
- Loss (amputation) or loss of use of
 - both lower extremities; **OR**
 - one lower extremity and one upper extremity affecting balance or propulsion; **OR**
 - one lower extremity plus residuals of organic disease or injury affecting balance or propulsion creating a need for regular, constant use of a wheelchair, braces, crutches or canes as a normal mode of getting around (although getting around by other methods may be occasionally possible); **OR**
- Loss or loss of use of both upper extremities precluding use of the arms at or above the elbow; **OR**
- Blindness in both eyes, with light perception only and the loss or loss of use of one lower extremity; **OR**
- A severe burn injury, meaning full thickness or subdermal burns that have resulted in contractures with limitation of motion of
 - two or more extremities; **OR**
 - at least one extremity and the trunk.

To support your claim for **SAH**, the evidence may alternatively show you are a:

- Veteran who served and became permanently disabled from a qualifying condition on or after September 11, 2001; **OR**
- Service member on active duty who was permanently disabled in the line of duty from a qualifying condition on or after the same date.

To support that you have a **qualifying condition under the alternative service criteria**, the evidence must show loss (amputation) or loss of use of one or more lower extremities, severely affecting the functions of balance or propulsion and creating a need for regular, constant use of a wheelchair, braces, crutches or canes as a normal mode of getting around, although getting around by other methods may be occasionally possible.

To support your claim for a **special home adaptation (SHA) grant**, the evidence must show you are a:

- Veteran entitled to compensation under 38 U.S.C. Chapter 11 for a qualifying condition; **OR**
- Service member on active duty who has a qualifying condition incurred or aggravated in the line of duty.

To support that you have a **qualifying condition for SHA**, the evidence must show:

- Blindness with central visual acuity of 20/200 or worse in each eye using a standard correcting lens; **OR**
- Blindness such that the visual field in each eye subtends an angle no greater than 20 degrees; **OR**
- Permanent and total disability from loss, or loss of use, of both hands; **OR**
- Permanent and total disability from a severe burn injury meaning deep partial thickness burns that have resulted in contractures with limitation of motion of two or more extremities or of at least one extremity and the trunk; **OR**
- full thickness or subdermal burns that have resulted in contracture(s) with limitation of motion of one or more extremities or the trunk; **OR**
- residuals of inhalation injury (including, but not limited to, pulmonary fibrosis, asthma, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease).

Auto Allowance

To support a claim for **automobile allowance or adaptive equipment**, the evidence must show that you have a service-connected disability resulting in:

1. the loss, or permanent loss of use, of at least a foot or a hand; **OR**
2. permanent impairment of vision of both eyes, resulting in:
 1. vision of 20/200 or less in the better eye with corrective glasses; **OR**
 2. vision of 20/200 or better, if there is a severe defect in your peripheral vision;**OR**
3. deep partial thickness or full thickness burns resulting in scar formation that cause contractures and limit motion of one or more extremities of the trunk and preclude effective operation of an automobile.

NOTE: You may be entitled to only adaptive equipment if you have ankylosis ("freezing") of at least one knee or one hip due to service-connected disability. Medical evidence, including a VA examination, will show these things. VA will provide an examination if it determines that one is necessary.

Helpless Child

To support a claim for benefits based on a veteran's child being helpless, the evidence must show that the child, before his or her 18th birthday, became permanently incapable of self-support due to a mental or physical disability.

IMPORTANT: For additional benefits to be payable for a child, the veteran must be entitled to compensation and evaluated as 30 percent or more disabled.

How VA determines the effective date:

If we grant your claim, the beginning date of your entitlement or increased entitlement to benefits will generally be based on the following factors:

- When we received your claim; **OR**
- When the evidence shows a level of disability that supports a certain rating under the rating schedule.

If VA received your claim within one year of your separation from the military, entitlement will be from the day following the date of your separation.

How VA determines the disability rating:

When we find disabilities to be service connected, we assign a disability rating. That rating can be changed if there are changes in your condition.

Depending on the disability involved, we will assign a rating from 0 percent to as much as 100 percent. VA uses a schedule for evaluating disabilities that is published as Title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 4. In rare cases, we can assign a disability level other than the levels found in the schedule for a specific condition if your impairment is not adequately covered by the schedule.

We consider evidence of the following in determining disability rating:

- Nature and symptoms of the condition;
- Severity and duration of the symptoms; **AND**
- Impact of the condition and symptoms on employment.

Examples of evidence that you should tell us about or give to us that may affect how we assign a disability evaluation include the following:

- Information about ongoing treatment records, including VA or other Federal treatment records you have not previously told us about;

- Social Security determinations;
- Statements from employers as to job performance, lost time, or other information regarding how your condition(s) affect your ability to work; **OR**
- Statements discussing your disability symptoms from people who have witnessed how the symptoms affect you.