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WDVA Bulletin No. 996

TO: County Veterans Service Offices

SUBJECT: Fully Developed Claims

Use of the Proper Claims Format

As you all know the Fully Developed Claim (FDC) process has been a hot topic in the VA for some time now. In the last year the WDVA Claims office, the VA and other Powers-of-Attorney have stressed that claims submitted to the VA come in using the FDC process.

As of late, the WDVA Claims office has been receiving numerous claims on a daily basis from the CVSO community using the VA Form 21-526b, versus the FDC form, VA Form 21-526ez. A vast majority of these claims should have been submitted using the FDC VA Form 21-526ez, therefore benefitting the veteran.

We wish to stress the importance of using the FDC process for all claims submitted to the VA from the CVSO community. This process has been proven to shave months off of the processing time for veteran's claims; and is the only claims process the WDVA Claims office uses for veterans that visit this office in person. In addition, FL 13-17 now allows VA to pay retro-active benefits up to one-year for veteran's claims under the FDC program after August 6, 2013.

Please review and make sure you are using the most current printing of the VA Form 21-526ez, 21-527ez or 21-534ez. As of this bulletin, if the incorrect form is used and submitted to WDVA, the claim will be returned to the CVSO for proper completion of the most recent version of the form. The WDVA will ensure an informal claim for FDC has been submitted anytime a claim is returned for use of the most current version.

As has been discussed in various training sessions and communications, the WDVA Claims office stresses the use of the FDC "Informal Claim" process for DIC, death pension, pension and compensation. Once all the evidence is obtained, the CVSO can then submit the formal claim using the 21-526ez, 21-527ez or the 21-534ez.

You are also reminded to use the correct format for your FDC "Informal Claims". The "Informal Claim" format is not being used universally and/or stated correctly by the CVSO community. If you are filing an "Informal Claim" for compensation; you **SHOULD NOT** be listing the conditions for which you are filing. The statement should simply read something like the example provided below:

"I wish to file an informal claim under the Fully Developed Claim program for service connected disability compensation (or for non-service connected disability pension/death pension/Dependent Indemnity Compensation) in order to protect my date of entitlement from this date."

If you wish you can state *compensation/pension* and circle one of the choices; please be sure to circle something.

All of us in the VSO community should be "all-in" when it comes to submitting FDC claims so as to help the VA reduce the backlog and provide better service for WI Veterans. Let's all make every effort to review claims being submitted and consider if the claim should be submitted as a FDC claim, and/or how it could be made a FDC.

If you have specific questions, please do not hesitate to contact Sandra Van Zeeland directly at (414) 902-5739 or her email at sandra.vanzeeland@va.gov.