

Apply for a disability rating



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Choose VA

This guide will help you submit a disability claim and obtain a disability rating, which is based on how much your service-connected disability impacts your capacity to earn a living. This rating is between 0%–100%. Your rating may give you access to certain VA benefits, such as compensation and on-going health care.

A checklist to help you file your disability claim and get your disability rating:

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PREPARATION

- Learn about different **types of claims** you can file (refer to back)
- Collect the documents** necessary to file a claim:
 - **Discharge papers (DD214 MEMBER-4** or equivalent)
 - **Military medical records**
 - **VA medical records/hospital reports** related to your disability
 - **Private medical records/hospital reports** related to your disability
- Submit **Disability Benefits Questionnaires (DBQs)** if desired

GET HELP

You can receive free help with preparing your claim from a VA-accredited representative or an employee at a local VA Office. Refer to back for more information.

WHERE CAN I FIND MY DISCHARGE PAPERS?

Visit eBenefits.va.gov to request a copy of your DD214 records.

WHAT ARE DBQs?

DBQs are **filled out by your private doctor to provide medical evidence to support your claim**. They may allow VA to grant your claim without the need for a medical examination.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

The length of time it takes to process a claim depends on:

- The type of claim filed
- How many injuries/disabilities you claimed
- How long it takes for VA to gather supporting evidence
- How many claims were in line when yours was filed

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APPLICATION

- Apply by submitting all documents in **one** of these ways:
 - Submit a claim **online** using eBenefits: eBenefits.va.gov
 - Complete a claim form **in person** at a VA Regional Office

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REVIEW AND DECISION

- Visit us **online** at eBenefits.va.gov or VA.gov to **track the status** of your claim
- Provide more information/documentation** if requested by VA
- Attend VA medical examination(s) if requested by VA

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NEXT STEPS

If approved, take steps to access the benefits you are eligible for:

- Review your award letter** to understand your rating
- Review the VA benefits handbook** that is sent to you

Information you'll need to know to file your claim and get your disability rating:

Am I eligible for benefits?

You may be eligible for VA disability benefits **if VA finds you have a disease, injury, or condition that resulted from service or was made worse during your military service.**

Common conditions include:

- Hearing loss/ringing in the ears
- Knee, ankle, or back pain/injury
- PTSD, anxiety, depression
- Traumatic brain injury
- Respiratory disease
- Ulcers
- Loss of range of motion
- Cancer (due to hazardous exposures)

Note: Work with VA to find out if you are eligible for disability benefits by filing a disability claim as soon as possible.

Who can file a disability claim?

- Veterans
- Servicemembers preparing to separate from the military
- Survivors/family seeking benefits owed to Veterans on a pending claim
- Veterans Service Organization (VSO) on behalf of Veterans/ Servicemembers

Who can help me?

You can receive free help with preparing your claim from a VA-accredited representative or an employee at a local VA Office.

Accredited representatives are individuals or organizations who are familiar with the process of filing a claim. Many accredited representatives work for Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), and may provide help free of charge.

Note: It is unlawful for any person or organization to charge a fee for assistance in preparing an application for VA benefits. VA-accredited agents and attorneys may charge fees for assisting with a claim for VA benefits only after VA has decided the claim and claimant has filed a notice of disagreement.

- To find a representative, visit us **online** at www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation (search by state) or eBenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/VSO-search
- To locate **your nearest VA Facility**, visit va.gov/find-locations

What are the different types of claims?

The type of claim you want to apply for depends on if you've filed before, if your conditions have changed, and how much responsibility you want to take to gather required documents. **Review the chart below** to determine what type of claim you should file.

WHEN YOU FILE	TYPE OF CLAIM	WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?
Pre-discharge More information at: www.benefits.va.gov/predischarge/index.asp	Benefit Delivery at Discharge (BDD)	Filed 180 - 90 days before separation; processed faster than post-discharge claims
Post-discharge More information at: www.benefits.va.gov/fdc	Standard	VA can help you gather documents
	Fully-developed	You gather your own documents; processed faster than a standard claim

OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE:

Why is receiving a disability rating important?

You need a service-connected disability with a rating in order to access certain VA benefits and services, including:

- Disability compensation
- Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (VR&E)
- Level of VA health care coverage
- Increased preference in federal hiring
- Fee exemption for VA home loans

Note: You can apply for a disability rating anytime throughout your life.

How does my disability rating affect my family?

If you are eligible for disability compensation, you may be paid additional amounts if you have a spouse, dependent child(ren), or dependent parents, and they may be eligible for additional benefits.

- To learn more, call your **Regional Benefits Office** or visit us **online** at www.benefits.va.gov/compensation

What if my condition doesn't affect my everyday life?

A 0% disability rating does not qualify you for compensation, but you may be eligible for other VA services, such as VA Health Care. While you might feel your condition is not serious, you should still consider applying for a rating.