

## **TDVS Benefits Bulletin**

**19-2**

### **TDVS Updates**

#### **VA and Veteran Benefit Updates**

#### **Quality Review Insights**

#### **Practice Like a Pro**

### **TDVS Updates**

#### **Governor Unveils Gulf War Monument in Downtown Nashville**

On Wednesday, September 11, 2019 Governor Lee participated in a solemn [unveiling](#) ceremony for the new Gulf War Monument on the Legislative Plaza. The Gulf War Monument honors the bravery and sacrifice of Tennesseans who served during Operations Desert Storm and Shield, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

#### **VetraSpec Form Updates**

On Saturday, September 28, 2019 VetraSpec updated the VA Form 21-0966 (Intent to File a Claim for Compensation and/or Pension, or Survivors Pension and/or DIC) to the AUG 2018 version. This is the current form version for this form and it remains eligible for filing using Digits to Digits (D2D).

On Monday, September 30, 2019 VetraSpec updated the VA Form 21-686c to the SEP 2018 version. This is the current form version for this form. It no longer remains eligible for stand-alone filing using D2D until the VA performs an upgrade to the D2D connection with VetraSpec, which is expected in January 2020.

### **VA and Veteran Benefit Updates**

#### **Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers**

Currently, VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (Caregivers Program) is only available to eligible veterans seriously injured in the line of duty on or after September 11, 2001. The VA MISSION Act of 2018 directed VA to expand eligibility to veterans of all eras using a phased approach.

In a [News Release](#) and testimony on September 25, 2019, VA outlined a timeline for expanded eligibility for Caregivers Program benefits. The first expansion for veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty on or before May 7, 1975 will



occur in the summer of 2020 or once the Secretary has certified that the new IT system is fully implemented. The remaining expansion for veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty after May 7, 1975 through September 10, 2001 would occur two years later.

More information on VA's Caregiver support can be found on their website at [www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov).

## **Quality Review Insights**

### Establishing Representation and Scheduled Hearings

When establishing representation, please alert the Appeals Division if the claimant is scheduled for a hearing, either before the Board of Veterans' Appeals or a VA Regional Office or Pension Management Center employee. You can notify the Appeals Division by phone at 615-695-6385 or email at [tdva.vbanas@va.gov](mailto:tdva.vbanas@va.gov).

This notice is required because dockets are created and notice is sent to the veteran approximately 30-45 days before a scheduled hearing. The organization representing the veteran at the time the docket is created or hearing scheduled is the only organization that receives notice. If TDVS establishes representation once a hearing is scheduled or docket is created, the Appeals Division may not know of the need for appellate representation prior to the hearing unless the Veterans Resource Coordinator or County Veterans Service Officer that establishes representation notifies the Appeals Division.

### Electronic Filing

The Digits to Digits (D2D) program remains the Appeals Division's preferred method to file claims. As a reminder, the VA Form 21-22, VA Form 21-0966 and VA Form 21-526EZ are eligible for D2D filing. A successful D2D submission is instantaneous, so D2D continues to be the quickest and most efficient way to get VA claims and related filings to VA for action. The following issues remain the most common issues that prevent successful electronic transmission of documents via D2D.

Failure to address required blocks on D2D eligible forms. Blocks with red text must be addressed. In some instances, VetraSpec has added red text to assist employees and partners in completing all required portions accurately. The most common missing information has been:

- Active Component Type
- Phone Numbers
- Active Service Dates



Lack of birth date included in veterans or claimants profile within VetraSpec. Failure to include the veteran or claimant's birth date within their VetraSpec profile, prior to form generation, prevents successful transmission of all eligible forms via D2D. Please ensure veteran and claimant birth dates are included in the VetraSpec profile.

### **Practice Like a Pro**

A basic but sometimes overlooked fact is that a Power of Attorney (POA) -- VA Form 21-22 -- is required to represent a claimant before VA. Veterans Resource Coordinators and County Veteran Service Officers should be reviewing VA systems to determine whether POA is of record when providing claims assistance. The VSO hotline -- 855-225-0709 -- is another resource that may be used to determine whether a POA is of record. Once POA has been determined, always ensure VetraSpec is updated to reflect the current POA of record in VA systems.