

## Discontinuance of Publicly Available Disability Benefits Questionnaires (DBQs)

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Greetings,

The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) is providing information about the sunset of making Disability Benefits Questionnaires available to the public on our website. VBA will continue to accept any evidence that Veterans or their accredited representatives wish to submit in support of disability compensation or pension claims. This message is intended to advise you about the change and provide guidance and resources.

### What are Disability Benefits Questionnaires?

- Disability Benefits Questionnaires, or DBQs, are standardized forms used by clinicians when performing disability examinations (also known as Compensation & Pension exams or C&P exams). The purpose of a DBQ is to ensure the clinician performing the exam captures and records all the information needed by VBA claims processors to make a decision on a Veteran's claim. The VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities (VASRD) found in 38 Code of Federal Regulations Part 4 has very specific requirements for rating conditions claimed by Veterans, and if the required information is not properly recorded during the examination, it could delay the claim while VA goes back to gather the necessary information. DBQs help prevent this delay by standardizing and guiding what information is recorded for each condition.
- DBQs are used by both Veterans Health Administration (VHA) clinicians and VA contract vendor clinicians. There are more than 80 different types of DBQs that cover the 15 body systems contained in the VASRD. They were originally designed and released in 2010 to not only standardize the capture of information during VA exams but also as an alternative for Veterans to take to their treating physicians, particularly if they were living overseas or in rural areas where getting a VA exam was more difficult.

### Why has VA removed DBQs from its public-facing website?

**VA continues to use DBQs during C&P exams conducted by VHA and VA's contracted vendor clinicians.** There are several reasons why VA decided to discontinue making DBQs available for public use.

- **We have modernized.** VBA is currently more than half-way through the process of updating all body systems in the VASRD. This is the first complete update of the VASRD since the 1945 Schedule. As each body system is updated, so are the corresponding DBQs. For DBQs used internally by VA, the updated forms are available immediately. However, for DBQs available publicly, VA must engage in the formal process required any time a public-facing form is modified, which can take more than a year. This has resulted in outdated forms being available publicly, which can result in a Veteran submitting a DBQ from a private doctor and then being scheduled for a VA C&P exam to gather more information.
- **We have increased our capacity to conduct C&P exams.** To supplement VHA's internal capacity to conduct C&P exams, VBA has contracted with three primary vendors to provide exams across the country. This has expanded the agency's ability to conduct exams in more places than just traditional VA Medical Centers and Outpatient Clinics. The contracted clinicians can provide wider coverage, especially in rural areas and in conducting exams in federal and state prison facilities. Also, one of VBA's contract vendors conducts C&P exams in 33 countries overseas, where VHA does not have a presence.
- **We are safeguarding against fraud.** In the past few years, we have seen a growing industry of individuals and companies marketing the service of completing DBQs for Veterans. Some have provided honest, valuable service to Veterans. However, VA has made hundreds of referrals to the VA Office of Inspector General of individuals and companies who are engaged in questionable, even fraudulent, practices that include charging high prices for completing DBQs or submitting DBQs with findings that are vastly different than the other evidence in the Veteran's claims folder. Also, it is a requirement that DBQs submitted by a private provider must be based on an exam conducted in person. VA's OIG recently issued an audit report about providers who were completing DBQs for Veterans remotely and recommended that VA revisit its practice of making public-facing DBQs available.

## **Will VA continue to accept evidence from my private physician?**

- Yes. VA accepts any evidence that a Veteran or his/her accredited representative chooses to submit in support of a claim. Once all evidence is received, VBA claims processors review and weigh the evidence overall as part of the decision-making process.
- Veterans may submit private treatment records or request that VBA obtain those records on their behalf in support of their claims.

- Key methods that private medical records can be submitted are as follows:
  - Veteran/Private treatment provider can send medical records directly to the  
**Department of Veterans Affairs**  
**Claims Intake Center**  
**P.O. Box 4444,**  
**Janesville, WI., 53547-4444**  
or submit to [VA regional office](#).
  - VA will request records with a [VA Form 21-4142](#) and [VA Form 21-4142a](#) signed by the Veteran.
  - Private treatment records can be uploaded as part of an on-line submission of a claim at <https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/>

## Resources

- We encourage all Veterans to work with an accredited organization for assistance in completing claims for VA benefits. The accredited representative can help in guiding the Veteran in submitting applicable medical records for consideration in his or her claim.
- A list of accredited organizations can be found on the Office of General Counsel site at this link: [Search the VA Office of the General Counsel's list](#).

## Questions on Claims?

You can start and continue to file claims with no delay.

### How to start or continue a claim:

1. File a claim online at <https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/> or <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/>
2. ~~Fax a claim to VA's Centralized Mail hub at (844) 531-7818 [VBA discontinued fax submission in 2021.]~~
3. Submit completed applications by paper mail to:

DEP'T VETERANS AFF - CLAIMS INTAKE CTR  
PO BOX 4444  
JANESVILLE WI 53547-4444

For individuals who need more assistance, VBA offers robust resources through the National Call Center (NCC) at 1-800-827-1000.

**Intent to file a claim:**

- Faxing or mailing a completed [VA Form 21-0966, Intent to File a Claim for Compensation and/or Pension, or Survivors Pension and/or DIC](#),
  - Calling the NCC or Veterans Service Center,
  - Starting a claim online, or
  - Asking a Veterans Service Organization (VSO) to complete one on a claimant's behalf.

*Note: Intent to file a claim will preserve a potential effective date and allow the Veteran up to one year to submit a completed claim form. Veterans can also work with a local VSO to submit claims electronically or by mail.*

A grateful nation thanks you for your service.

Sincerely,

Veterans Benefits Administration