



Department of  
Veterans Affairs

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# Fact Sheet

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**VA has sent a proposal to the Federal Register to require the use of existing standardized forms when Veterans file disability claims or Notices of Disagreement (NOD) concerning their claims decision.**

**The rule announced today is simply a notice of proposed rulemaking. It allows for a period of public comment before the rules changes go into effect.**

Under current law, a Veteran or survivor is not required to use a form to seek disability benefits from VA; supplemental or subsequent claims –which make up the bulk of the disability claims inventory -- may be submitted, for example, on any piece of paper. This ultimately slows the process of getting Veterans and their families' decisions on their benefits claims. The current process differs from almost all other government and non-government application processes, such as applying for social security, applying for a driver's license, or applying for a job.

*These proposed changes are intended to modernize the VA system so all Veterans receive more timely and accurate decisions of their claims and appeals.*

**There are two major components of the proposed changes.**

- **First:** Requires all disability claims to be filed on standardized forms specified by VA
  - Standardized forms would be required for all disability claims regardless of type or nature of the claim
  - Either a VA Form 526 or 526EZ is currently required for original (first-time) disability claims but is optional for supplemental (subsequent) claims
  - The proposed rule would require Veterans to file supplemental (subsequent or second-time) claims on a version of VA Form 526
  
- **Second:** Requires all appeals to be filed using a standardized Notice of Disagreement in cases where VA provides that form to the claimant.
  - Currently Veterans and survivors may either write their disagreement expressing dissatisfaction with a claims decision and their desire to appeal on any piece of paper, or use VA Form 21-0958 Notice of Disagreement.
  - The proposed rule would require Veterans to use only VA Form 21-0958 to start the appeals process

### **How does this impact Veterans?**

- By establishing standard forms for Veterans to use, the filing process will become much more efficient, allowing the Veteran to precisely state what he or she is seeking.
- The use of standardized forms will make the entire claims process more convenient since it allows Veterans the opportunity to apply for benefits by “filling in the blanks” on forms either on paper or online. The use of standardized forms will give VA the information needed to move the claim through the process more quickly.
- When applying for disability compensation online through the eBenefits web portal, the application process essentially asks the claimant a series of questions requiring responses, which satisfies the requirements of standardized forms. Veterans who cannot file online may download the forms from the VA website or contact their regional office to have a form sent to their home. Veterans Service Organization representatives are also available to assist Veterans with their claims.

### **How does this help VA process claims more quickly?**

- The use of standardized forms will avoid the need for VA to contact the claimant for clarification on their initial request, a step which occurs often in our current process.
- By using a form – as every other agency does – VA will know exactly what the Veteran is claiming or appealing and can then proceed with its next steps as quickly as possible.
- These changes are intended to modernize the VA system so that all Veterans receive more timely and accurate adjudications of their claims and appeals.
- The use of standardized forms is part of our efforts to ensure we achieve the Secretary’s goal to eliminate the backlog in 2015 when we will process all claims in 125 days with 98 percent accuracy.

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