**What evidence will I need to provide to support my claim?**

**You can help to support your VA disability claim by providing documents, such as:**

* VA medical records and hospital records that relate to your claimed illnesses or injuries or that show your rated disability has gotten worse
* Private medical records and hospital reports that relate to your claimed illnesses or injuries or that show your disability has gotten worse
* Supporting statements you’d like to provide from family members, friends, clergy members, law enforcement personnel, or those you served with that can tell us more about your claimed condition and how and when it happened or how it got worse

Depending on the type of claim you file, you may gather supporting documents yourself, or you can ask for our help to gather evidence.

[Find out what evidence we’ll need for your claim](https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/evidence-needed/)

# Evidence needed for your disability claim

When you file a disability claim, we review all available evidence (supporting documents) to determine if you qualify for benefits. Find out what evidence we’ll need—and what your options are for gathering documents to support your claim.

### You can still file a claim and apply for benefits during the coronavirus pandemic

Get the latest information about in-person services, claim exams, extensions, paperwork, decision reviews and appeals, and how best to contact us during this time.
[Go to our coronavirus FAQs](https://www.va.gov/coronavirus-veteran-frequently-asked-questions/#can-i-still-file-a-claim-or-ge)

### What evidence will VA look for to support my disability claim?

**We’ll look for evidence that shows you have:**

* A current physical or mental disability (damage to your body or mind that makes you less able—or totally unable—to do everyday tasks, including meaningful work), **and**
* An event, injury, or illness that happened while you were serving in the military to cause this disability

## What documents will I need to support my claim?

We require certain documents to support all claims for disability benefits.

**You’ll need to submit or give us permission to gather these:**

* Your DD214 or other separation documents
* Your service treatment records
* Any medical evidence related to your illness or injury (like doctor’s reports, X-rays, and medical test results)

**Note:** In 1973, a fire at the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) in St. Louis destroyed records held for Veterans who were discharged from the Army and Air Force during certain periods of time. Your records may have been destroyed in the fire if you were discharged from the Army between November 1, 1912, and January 1, 1960, or if you were discharged from the Air Force between September 25, 1947, and January 1, 1964. If you think your records may have been involved in this fire, you can learn more about the fire and how to get help filing a claim.
[Learn more about the fire at the NPRC](https://www.benefits.va.gov/COMPENSATION/NPRC1973Fire.asp)

## What should the evidence show to support my disability claim?

This depends on the type of claim you’re filing. Find out what evidence you’ll need for the different claim types listed below.

**Notice to Veterans and service members of evidence needed:** We’re required by law to tell you what evidence you’ll need to provide to support your disability claim.

For your convenience, the information below is a summary of evidence requirements (called “section 5103 notice”). You can view the [official evidence requirements in VA Form 21-526EZ (PDF)](https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-526ez-ARE.pdf).

* Original claim—the first claim you file for disability benefits
* Increased claim—a claim for more compensation for a disability that we’ve already determined to be service connected and that’s gotten worse
* New claim—a claim for added benefits or other benefit requests related to an existing service-connected disability
* Secondary service-connected claim—a claim for a new disability that’s linked to a service-connected disability you already have
* Supplemental claim—a claim providing new evidence to support a disability claim that was denied

**Find out what additional evidence or forms you’ll need if you’re filing a claim for any of these issues:**

* PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder)
* Individual Unemployability
* Temporary 100% disability rating
* VA Title 38 U.S.C. 1151 claims
* Aid and Attendance benefits and Housebound allowance
* Specially Adapted Housing or Special Home Adaptation
* Automobile allowance and adaptive equipment
* Seriously disabled child

## Explore your options for gathering evidence

* [Fully developed disability claims](https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/evidence-needed/fully-developed-claims)

[With the Fully Developed Claims program, you send in all the evidence you have—or can easily get—when you file your claim. Find out how you can use this program to get a faster decision on your disability benefits claim.](https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/evidence-needed/fully-developed-claims)

#### [Standard disability claims](https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/evidence-needed/standard-claims)

[With standard claims, we take more responsibility for gathering the evidence we need to make a decision on your claim. Find out how to file a standard disability claim.](https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/evidence-needed/standard-claims)

We’ll also review your discharge papers (DD214 or other separation documents) and service treatment records.

**Please note**: You don’t have to submit any evidence to support your claim, but we may need to schedule a claim exam so we can learn more about your condition.

You should also know that you have up to a year from the date we receive your claim to turn in any evidence. If you start your application and need time to gather more supporting documents, you can save your application and come back later to finish it. We’ll recognize the date you started your application as your date of claim as long as you complete it within 365 days.

**Can I file my claim online?**

It depends on your situation. Answer a few questions, and we'll guide you to the right place.

## What other ways can I file my disability claim?

### By mail

File your claim by mail using an Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits (VA Form 21-526EZ).
[Download VA Form 21-526EZ (PDF)](https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-526EZ-ARE.pdf)

Print the form, fill it out, and send it to this address:

Department of Veterans Affairs
Claims Intake Center
PO Box 4444
Janesville, WI 53547-4444

### In person

Bring your application to a VA regional office near you.
[Find a VA regional office near you](https://www.va.gov/find-locations/?facilityType=benefits)

### With the help of a trained professional

You can work with a trained professional called an accredited representative to get help filing a claim for disability compensation.

# Get help filing your claim or appeal

If you need help filing a claim or appeal, you may want to work with an accredited attorney, a claims agent, or a Veterans Service Officer (VSO). We trust these professionals because they’re trained and certified in the VA claims and appeals processes and can help you with VA-related needs.

VSOs work on behalf of Veterans and service members—as well as their dependents and survivors. Find out more about accredited representatives and how they can help you.

## What happens after I file my VA disability claim?

[Find out what happens after you file](https://www.va.gov/disability/after-you-file-claim/)

You don’t need to do anything while you’re waiting unless we send you a letter asking for more information. If we schedule exams for you, be sure not to miss them.

[**Check your VA claim status**](https://www.va.gov/track-claims)

### How long does it take VA to make a decision?

**105.9 days**

Average number of days to complete disability-related claims in April 2020

### What if I had or need an in-person appointment for VA benefits or services?

We’ve temporarily closed our regional offices to the public and stopped in-person appointments. But we’re using virtual services to hold appointments for some benefit activities by telephone or online video through [VA Video Connect](https://www.mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect) or other approved video meeting tools. Once your video appointment is scheduled, you’ll receive a VA Video Connect link.

We’ll work with you to change your in-person appointment to a virtual appointment for benefits and services such as:

* **Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E)**
* **Chapter 36 educational and career counseling**
* **Military service coordinators**
* **Home loans:**We’re working with lenders and appraisers to offer temporary options to continue processing and closing loans remotely. You can continue to work with your lender to follow state and local laws for notarizing documents. And you can designate an attorney-in-fact to use a Power of Attorney to sign documents on your behalf at closing.
* **Specially Adapted Housing grants:**Our staff can help you complete the grant application process by phone, video, and email.
* **Fiduciary claims:**We can conduct many field exams by phone. In cases where a phone exam isn’t appropriate, we may do a field exam through VA Video Connect. Our staff will contact you to set up a phone or video exam.
* **Transition assistance:**You can follow the VA Transition and Assistance Program (TAP) curriculum and other learning modules online. Use your Common Access Card- (CAC-)enabled device to access the course (number TGPS-US006) through the Department of Defense’s [Joint Knowledge Online](https://jkodirect.jten.mil/Atlas2/page/login/Login.jsf). You can also explore [VA benefits and services online.](https://www.va.gov/service-member-benefits/) For more help by phone, ask your DOD TAP manager to connect you with a VA benefits adviser.

Please work with your VA representative to reschedule appointments. If you have questions, you can also call us at 800-827-1000. We’re here Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. ET.

# File additional forms for your disability claim

Find out if you’ll need to turn in any additional forms when you file your disability claim.

### You can still file a claim and apply for benefits during the coronavirus pandemic

Get the latest information about in-person services, claim exams, extensions, paperwork, decision reviews and appeals, and how best to contact us during this time.
[Go to our coronavirus FAQs](https://www.va.gov/coronavirus-veteran-frequently-asked-questions/#can-i-still-file-a-claim-or-ge)

## Do I need to turn in any additional forms?

In some cases, you may need to turn in one or more additional forms to support your disability claim.

| **If you’re:** | **You’ll need to turn in:** |
| --- | --- |
| **A National Guard and Reserve member** | All your service treatment and personnel records from your unit(s) |
| **Claiming Individual Unemployability** | **Both of these:**A Veteran’s Application for Increased Compensation Based on Unemployability (VA Form 21-8940)[Download VA Form 21-8940 (PDF)](https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-8940-ARE.pdf)**and**A Request for Employment Information in Connection with Claim for Disability Benefits (VA Form 21-4192)[Download VA Form 21-4192 (PDF)](https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-4192-ARE.pdf) |
| **Claiming posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)** | A Statement in Support of Claim for Service Connection for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (VA Form 21-0781)[Download VA Form 21-0781 (PDF)](https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-0781-ARE.PDF)**or**You can fill out VA Form 21-0781 when you file a disability claim online.[File a disability compensation claim](https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/) |
| **Claiming PTSD based on a personal assault** | A Statement in Support of Claim for Service Connection for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Secondary to Personal Assault (VA Form 21-0781a)[Download VA Form 21-0781a (PDF)](https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-0781a-ARE.pdf)**or**You can fill out VA Form 21-0781a when you file a disability claim online.[File a disability compensation claim](https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/) |
| **Claiming Specially Adapted Housing or a Special Home Adaptation** | An Application in Acquiring Specially Adapted Housing or Special Home Adaptation Grant (VA Form 26-4555)[Download VA Form 26-4555 (PDF)](https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/vba-26-4555-are.pdf) |
| **Claiming an auto allowance** | An Application for Automobile or Other Conveyance and Adaptive Equipment (VA Form 21-4502)[Download VA Form 21-4502 (PDF)](https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-4502-ARE.pdf) |
| **Claiming an auto adaptive-equipment grant** | An Application for Adaptive Equipment—Motor Vehicle (VA Form 10-1394)[Download VA Form 10-1394 (PDF)](https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/10-1394-fill.pdf) |
| **Claiming additional benefits because you or your spouse needs Aid and Attendance** | An Examination for Housebound Status or Permanent Need for Regular Aid and Attendance (VA Form 21-2680)[Download VA Form 21-2680 (PDF)](https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-2680-ARE.pdf) |
| **Claiming Aid and Attendance because you’re in a nursing home** | A Request for Nursing Home Information in Connection with Claim for Aid and Attendance (VA Form 21-0779)[Download VA Form 21-0779 (PDF)](https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-0779-ARE.pdf) |
| **Claiming dependents** | A Declaration of Status of Dependents (VA Form 21-686c)[Download VA Form 21-686c (PDF)](https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-686c-ARE.pdf)**And:****If your dependent is a child in school between the ages of 18 and 23**, you’ll also need to turn in a Request for Approval of School Attendance (VA Form 21-674).[Download VA Form 21-674 (PDF)](https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-674-ARE.pdf)**If your dependent is a seriously disabled child**, you’ll also need to turn in all private medical records for the child’s disabilities. |
| **Authorizing the release of your medical records to VA** | Authorization to Disclose Information to VA (VA Form 21-4142)[Download VA Form 21-4142 (PDF)](https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-4142-ARE.pdf)**or**You can fill out VA Form 21-4142 when you file a disability claim online.[File a disability compensation claim](https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/) |