

**FROM: Steve Muir**

**TO: Fellow Post 543 Members, Legionnaires and Veterans –**

**RE: NEW AND IMPROVED VA PROGRAM**

**The VA recently announced this “new & improved” program - a carry-on from the Fully Developed Claim (FDC) the VA introduced sometime back.**

**New Administration, new initiatives, new lingo! The DRC claims processing time within 30 days - great if it happens. A lot of caveats - applies to requests for increase in current compensation only, (must be rated by VA) and you must go thru a Veteran Services Officer (VSO), Like Anita/Glen for Brunswick County, or American Legion NSO, DAV, etc. The 30 days starts at Step 4 below - once your VSO submits the DRC to VA electronically. Many types of claims are not included currently in the DRC process, (unemployability, appeal pending, pension, death benefits, special monthly comp, if already rated at 100%, etc.). Later they plan to add additional types of claims.**

**I have attached a chart (outline) and some FAQ's. Recommend sharing this with any Veteran you know may be seeking or considering an increase in their rating based on their condition worsening since they were first rated by the VA. Medical evidence is also required, either from VA or private medical professionals.**

**This could be a positive development, but personally will take a “wait/see” approach. Any improvement is a good thing. Working on a couple cases now and may “test” this with VSO assistance. For more details go to the ‘[VA.GOV](http://VA.GOV)’ website - search Decision Ready Claims.**

**Here is their latest release:**

## **Decision Ready Claims**

# **A quick overview of the DRC Program and working with accredited VSOs.**

### **What is a Decision Ready Claim?**

The DRC Program allows you to submit VA compensation claims that are decision-ready so you can get your claim processed as fast as possible.

To submit a DRC, you must:

- Appoint and work with an accredited Veterans Service Organization (VSO),
- Gather all relevant and required evidence to support your claim, and
- Attend a VA claim exam, if needed, before submitting your claim.

When you work with an accredited VSO and provide all the necessary evidence with your application, you can get a decision on your claim in 30 days or less.

### **How do I find an accredited VSO?**

To find an accredited VSO near you, go to the [VSO Search](#) page on eBenefits. Accredited VSOs are fully trained on the DRC Program and can help you determine if a DRC is right for you.

### **What type of claims can I file through the DRC Program?**

Currently, you can only file a claim for increased disability compensation through the DRC Program. Your disability must already be service-connected, and you must have medical evidence to show the condition has gotten worse since your last rating.

Go to the eligibility section to see a full list of exclusions that would remove your claim from the DRC Program.

### **Will I be able to file other types of claims through the DRC Program?**

Yes, VA is currently working to expand the DRC Program to include more types of claims. Revisit this page or check with your VSO to see if any updates have been made to the Program.

### **How do I file a Decision Ready Claim?**

Work with your VSO to gather all relevant and required evidence to support your claim, including federal and medical records and completed Disability Benefits Questionnaires (DBQs).

As part of the DRC Program, your VSO can also request a claim exam for you, if needed. You will then work with a VA contract exam partner to quickly schedule an

exam at a time that works best for you. The results of your exam can then be included along with your application.

Your VSO will check to make sure all of the necessary information is included and help you electronically submit your claim to VA. Giving VA all the relevant evidence when you submit your DRC allows your claim to go directly to a VA rating specialist for a decision.

### **Am I eligible to file a claim through the DRC Program?**

If you are filing a compensation claim for increase, you may be eligible. However, your claim will be excluded from the DRC Program if you are:

- Waiting for a decision on a pending disability claim
- Currently appealing the condition you want to file a DRC for
- Rated at 100% for your condition
- Filing a Pre-discharge claim
- Filing a claim for Pension
- An incarcerated Veteran
- Claiming Individual Unemployability
- Seeking Special Monthly Pension
- Filing an in-service death claim
- A pregnant Veteran
  
- Living outside of the U.S.
- Filing a claim for Parents Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)
- Submitting a DRC application without a Veteran signature
- Filing a burial claim (unless it's submitted with a DRC-eligible DIC claim)
- Filing for Chapter 18 (Spina Bifida) and any other birth defects for dependent children
- Filing a restricted access claim (includes VBA employees, relatives of VBA employees, National Service Officers, or high-ranking government officials)

### **What happens if my claim doesn't meet DRC criteria?**

If a VA rating specialist does not have enough information to make a decision on your claim when it's submitted, your claim will be routed through the Fully Developed Claim (FDC) Program or the traditional claim process.

You and your VSO will be notified of the reason(s) why your claim couldn't be processed as a DRC.

### **Where can I get more information?**

Have more questions? Reach out to your local VSO or call the VA toll-free number at 1-800-827-1000.