### Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP) Phase 1

### Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

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| In This Section | This section contains the following topics: |

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| Topic | Topic Name |
| 1 | Overview of RAMP |
| 2 | Opt-In Intake Procedures |
| 3 | Higher-Level Review (HLR) |
| 4 | Supplemental Claims |
| 5 | RAMP Decision Notification Requirements |
| 6 | RAMP Sample Letter Templates |

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| Background | The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) will conduct a pilot program, the Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP), which allows most Veterans who have a pending legacy appeal to opt into VBA’s **supplemental claim** or **higher-level review** lanes in the new claims and appeals process signed into law on August 23, 2017. VBA will administer this pilot during the 18-month period after enactment allowed for full implementation of the new process and continue processing elections by Veterans as long as necessary thereafter to continue to accelerate resolution of legacy appeals.  This conversion of legacy workload to new process workload will be phased based upon the age of the appeal, either overall or by appeal stage, or whether the Veteran has requested VBA’s Decision Review Officer (DRO) review process or a Board of Veterans’ Appeals (BVA) hearing, as well as other factors. VBA will also test consolidation of the workload at certain regional offices that have capacity and proven workload management expertise. Most importantly, Veterans will benefit from the early resolution opportunities and effective date for benefits protection features of the new process.  RAMP requires opt-in notices to Veterans, training for claims processors and Veterans Service Organization (VSO) representatives and development of systems updates and controls to track and execute decisions under the supplemental claim and higher-level review lanes. The pilot will be conducted in phases. Phase 1 will begin in November 2017. |

#### 1. Overview of RAMP

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| Introduction | This topic contains information about RAMP, including:   * description of RAMP * appeals eligible for RAMP processing * Phase 1 of RAMP * opt-in notification letters, and * centralized processing of RAMP. |

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| **a. Description of RAMP** | * Under RAMP, appellants will be allowed early participation in the new **supplemental claim** and **higher-level review** lanes beginning in November 2017. * Participation in RAMP is only open to Veterans with a legacy compensation appeal and is voluntary. * Participants must elect to have all of their appeal issues reviewed as a whole under only one claim lane option. * RAMP will run continuously through the 18-month implementation period for the Veterans *Appeals Modernization and Improvement Act of 2017*. VBA will continue to process elections as long as necessary thereafter to continue to accelerate resolution of legacy appeals. * During RAMP, VA will pilot the higher-level review and supplemental claims concepts, as well as the new decision notification requirements. |

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| **b. Appeals Eligible for RAMP Processing** | Participation in RAMP is only open to Veterans who receive a RAMP Notice letter and have a **compensation benefit** appeal pending in the current (legacy) appeals process.  To be eligible the appeal must be:   * an active appeal pending for a compensation claim and * in one of the following appeals stages:   + NOD   + Form 9   + Certified to BVA (not activated)   + Remand   VA **will not** accept an election to participate in RAMP if the above noted conditions are not met.  ***Note:*** Other issues on appeal, such as pension claims, survivors claims, insurance claims, or loan guaranty claims are excluded from processing under RAMP in addition to compensation appeals in the following stages:   * Certified to BVA (Activated: formally placed on the Board’s docket) * Remand Returned   Excluded appeals will remain pending in the current (legacy) appeals process. |

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| **c. Phase 1 of RAMP** | RAMP will be rolled out in phases.  During Phase 1, in the first initial monthly mailing, VA will begin offering the opportunity to opt-in to appellants who meet the eligibility requirements in section 1.b. and have the oldest appeals in all eligible appeals stages.  In addition, VA will exclude participation of appellants who are represented by a private attorney. |

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| **d. Opt-in Notification Letters** | In October 2017, VA will begin mailing letters to appellants notifying them of the opportunity to opt-in to RAMP. The letter contains a response page that allows appellants to notify us of their desire to opt-in to the program, which lane they want their appeal to be processed through, as well as an option for them to withdraw all of their pending appeals. |

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| e. Centralized Processing of RAMP | Initially all intake and claims processing activities will be centralized at the Appeals Resource Center (ARC).  VBA will expand processing activities to other locations as needed. |

#### 2. Opt-In Intake Procedures

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| **Introduction** | This topic contains information about opt-in intake procedures, including:   * acceptable format of RAMP opt-in elections * RAMP lanes * placing opt-in elections under control, * exhibit of RAMP Opt-in Election, and * exhibit of ARC Coversheet. |

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| a. Acceptable Format of RAMP Opt-in Elections | To participate in RAMP, the appellant or his/her authorized representative must opt-in in writing. As the opt-in equates to withdrawal of the pending appeal, VBA cannot take the opt-in over the phone.  VBA will not accept opt-in elections in any format other than the RAMP Opt-In Election. The notification to opt-in requests a response within 60 days; however, VBA will accept opt-in elections from any qualified appellant or appellant’s authorized representative that are received outside of the 60 days submission period. |

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| **b. Ramp Lanes** | Under the RAMP, appellants are offered the opportunity to opt-in to one of the following new Appeals Modernization lanes:   * higher-level review, or * supplemental claim.   ***Note:*** After receiving an initial decision under RAMP, Veterans have up to one year to file a notice of disagreement with the Board of Veterans’ Appeals for review after the effective date of the new law, no earlier than February 2019. |

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| **c. Placing Opt-in Elections Under Control** | When a RAMP election is received, the intake team at the centralized intake office will take the steps in the table below to place the election under control. |

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| **Step** | **Action** |
| 1 | In VBMS,   * ensure the DOCUMENT TYPE is *Correspondence*, and * update the SUBJECT LINE with *RAMP Election*. |
| 2 | Review the eFolder and VACOLS to determine if the Veteran has an appeal eligible to participate in RAMP.  If yes, go to step 3.  If no,   * generate the “RAMP Ineligible Letter” in Letter Creator, * select the reason why the Veteran is ineligible, * mail the letter to the Veteran, and * document the above actions with a permanent note in VBMS.   ***Reference:*** See section 1.b. above for eligibility criteria and section 2.g. for a sample “RAMP Ineligible Letter.” |
| 3 | Establish an end product (EP) with the appropriate claim label based on the following table:   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **If the appellants elects …** | **Then establish an EP …** | **With claim label…** | | higher-level review | 682 | * RAMP - Higher-Level Review Rating ***or*** * RAMP – Higher Level Review Non-Rating. | | supplemental claim | 683 | * RAMP-Supplemental Claim Review Rating ***or*** * RAMP – Supplemental Claim Review Non-Rating. | |
| 4 | Add a placeholder contention of *RAMP*. |
| 5 | Refer the election to the designated VSR for processing. |

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| **d. PCT: Receipt of RAMP Opt-in Election** | VBA will only accept RAMP Opt-in Elections from appellants who received the RAMP Opt-in Notice letter.  When an appellant visits a local office in person and wishes to submit a RAMP Opt-in Election, Public Contact Team personnel should review the VBMS eFolder to determine if an Opt-in Notice was sent to the appellant.  If the appellant is eligible and received a notice letter:   * accept the Opt-in Election, * date stamp it to preserve the date of receipt, * fax the Opt-in Election with the ARC Coversheet on top to the scan vendor as outlined in M21-1, Part **III.ii.1.E.3, and** * **document your actions in VBMS as a permanent note.**   If the appellant ***has not*** received notice and is therefore not eligible:   * do not accept the Opt-in Election and * notify the appellant that VA will notify him or her if they have an appeal eligible for participation in RAMP.   ***Reference:*** See 2.f. for a copy of the ARC Coversheet. |

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| **e. Exhibit: RAMP Opt-in Election** | The following contains a sample of the RAMP Opt-in Election. |

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| **f. Exhibit: ARC Coversheet** | The following contains a sample of the ARC Coversheet. |

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#### 3. Higher-Level Review

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| **Introduction** | This topic contains information about HLR, including:   * definition of higher-level review * initial actions by VSR on an HLR * higher-level review authority * overview of the HLR process * definition of informal conference * conducting informal conferences * HLR informal conference worksheet * definition of duty to assist error * handling duty to assist errors * definition of maximum benefit * HLR and closed evidentiary record * handling new and relevant evidence received before an opt-in election * handling new and relevant evidence received after an opt-in election, * proper tracking of DTA errors, and * exhibit of HLR Informal Conference Worksheet. |

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| **a. Definition: Higher Level Review** | A ***higher-level review*** (HLR) under RAMP will consist of a *de novo* review of the issue(s) on appeal.  ***Important***: The Higher-Level Reviewer will only consider evidence that was before VBA at the time the appellant elected to opt-in to RAMP. VBA **WILL NOT** consider any evidence submitted after the appellant elected the higher-level review. |

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| **b. Initial Actions by VSR on an HLR** | VSRs will conduct the initial review of the HLR and take the following actions: |

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| **Step** | **Action** |
| 1 | Close VACOLS record(s) using the dispatch function and selecting withdrawn by appellant. |
| 2 | Send *RAMP Withdrawal Letter* in Letter Creator. |
| 3 | Enter all contentions to the EP 682 Higher-Level Review. |
| 4 | Make the claim ready to rate. |
| 5 | Refer the claim to the Higher-Level Reviewer. |

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| **c. Higher-Level Review Authority** | Authority to conduct higher-level reviews is granted to Decision Review Officers (DROs). |

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| **d. Overview of the HLR Process** | The following table is an overview of the process used by the higher-level reviewer. |

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| **Stage** | **Description** |
| 1 | Identify if an informal conference was requested by the claimant. |
| 2 | Determine if a duty to assist error was committed in the processing of the prior decision |
| 3 | Determine if evidence was submitted after the HLR election, and if needed, follow the procedures in 3.d. |
| 4 | Conduct *de novo* review of the prior decision, considering any additional evidence submitted prior to the HLR opt-in election. |
| 5 | Issue a decision. |

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| **e. Definition: Informal Conference** | For the purposes of RAMP, an ***informal conference*** is defined as contact with a claimant and/or his or her representative, telephonically, or as determined by VA, for the sole purpose of allowing the claimant or representative to identify any errors of law or fact in a prior decision. |

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| **f. Conducting Informal Conferences** | VA will conduct one informal conference during a higher-level review, when requested by the claimant or authorized representative. The higher-level reviewer with determinative authority over the issue will conduct the informal conference. VA will not accept any new evidence during the informal conference.  If the claimant requests an informal conference on the RAMP opt-in response, the higher-level reviewer will make at least two attempts to contact the appellant or his or her representative. Informal conferences will take place telephonically. On a case-by-case basis, VA may make an exception and conduct the informal conference in person when good cause is shown as to why telephonic communication cannot take place.  If contact cannot be made,   * document the unsuccessful contact on [***VA Form 27-0820, Report of General Information***](http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/20/cio/20s5/forms/VBA-27-0820-ARE.pdf), and * provide a copy of the form to the appellant’s accredited representative and associate it with the eFolder.   If contact is made,   * document it on a HLR Informal Conference Worksheet, and * provide a copy of this documentation to the appellant’s accredited representative and associate it with the electronic claims folder (eFolder). |

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| **g. HLR Informal Conference Worksheet** | Use the *HLR Informal Conference Worksheet* to   * document the informal conference, and * describe specific error(s) of fact or law identified by the claimant or representative.   ***Note***: Place the *HLR Informal Conference Worksheet* in the Veteran’s eFolder.  ***Reference***: For a sample of the *HLR* *Informal Conference Worksheet*, see section 3.o. |

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| **h. Definition: DTA Error** | For the purposes of RAMP, a ***duty to assist error*** is defined as an error in applying the provisions of 38 CFR 3.159 for the gathering of evidence, to include examinations, which occurred prior to the appealed decision.  Reference: For instructions on handling evidence received after the appealed decision that triggers VA’s duty to assist, see section 3.l. |

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| **i. Handling Duty to Assist Errors** | If the higher-level reviewer determines that a duty to assist error was committed prior to the decision being reviewed and the reviewer is not able to grant the maximum benefit based on the evidence of record, the claim must be returned for readjudication.  Follow the steps in the table below when a duty to assist error has been identified. |

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| **Step** | **Responsible Employee** | **Action** |
| 1 | Higher-Level Reviewer | Can the maximum benefit be granted for any issue?   * If *yes*, * issue a decision for the issue(s) that can be granted, and * proceed to the next step for any remaining issue. * If *no*, proceed to the next step.   ***Note***: If issuing a rating decision, do not list any deferred issue(s) in the rating decision. |
| 2 | Higher-Level Reviewer | * Complete deferred rating action for any remaining issues * documenting all favorable findings, if applicable, * detailing the development actions needed * instructing the VSR to * clear the EP 682 for a complete deferral or promulgate the EP 682 if any issues are granted, * establish an EP 683 with   + claim label *RAMP – HLR – DTA Error* and   + using the date of receipt of the RAMP election as the date of claim, and * add the appropriate DTA special issue to a contention * refer the claim to the VSR, and * proceed to the next step. |
| 3 | VSR | Send the *HLR DTA* letter from the Letter Creator to the participant or, if a subsequent development letter is needed, add the following:  *You have chosen to participate in the Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP). VA completed your request for higher-level review, and discovered an error in our duty to assist in gathering evidence in support of your claim. VA will take the following development actions to correct our error and forward your claim to the rating activity for further processing.*  *We are currently working on your claim.* |
| 4 | VSR | Complete required development activity. |
| 5 | VSR | Once all records development is complete, make the claim ready to rate and refer to the RVSR for a new rating decision. |

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| **j. Definition: Maximum Benefit** | For the purposes of RAMP, ***maximum benefit*** is defined as the highest schedular evaluation allowed by law and regulation for the issue under review. For ancillary benefits, an award of the benefit sought is the ***maximum benefit***.  ***Important***: The above definition applies even if the issue under appeal is service connection. |

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| **k. HLR and Closed Evidentiary Record** | If a Veteran opts to have an appeal reconsidered under the RAMP HLR, the record will be considered closed as of the date the HLR election is received by VBA. This means any decision issued should consider both the evidence in the prior decision, as well as the evidence received after the decision, but before the opt-in election was received. |

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| **l. Handling New and Relevant Evidence Received Before an Opt-in Election** | Since the evidentiary record closes at the time an opt-in election is received, the HLR may consider new and relevant evidence that was submitted before the opt-in. In some cases, this evidence will require additional duty to assist actions; however, when this occurs, the claim may not be considered under the HLR lane.  Follow the procedures in the table below when a RAMP HLR contains new evidence received prior to the HLR election. |

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| **Step** | **Action** |
| 1 | Can the maximum benefit be granted for any issue?   * If *yes*, * issue a decision for the issue(s) that can be granted, and * proceed to the next step for any remaining issue. * If *no*, proceed to the next step.   ***Note***: If issuing a rating decision, do not list any deferred issue(s) in the rating decision. |
| 2 | Does the new evidence require development, such as a records or examination request?   * If *yes*, * complete deferred rating action for any remaining issues * documenting any favorable findings, if applicable, * instructing the VSR to change the claim label to *RAMP – HLR – Addt’l Evidence*, and * detailing the development actions needed * refer the claim to the VSR, and * proceed to the next step. * If *no*, * issue a decision, and * disregard remaining steps in the table. |
| 3 | Complete development activity. |
| 4 | Once all records development is complete, refer to the RVSR for a supplemental claim decision. |

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| **m. Handling New and Relevant Evidence Received After an Opt-in Election** | Follow the procedure in the table below when a RAMP HLR contains new and relevant evidence submitted after the RAMP HLR election. |

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| **Step** | **Action** |
| 1 | Attempt to contact the RAMP participant based on the following table.   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **If the participant …** | **Then …** | | has a representative | first attempt to contact the representative and if unsuccessful, contact the participant. | | does not have a representative | make two attempts to contact the participant. | |
| 2 | Was contact with the participant or representative successful?   * If *yes*, explain to the participant that a supplemental claim is more appropriate, but that if HLR is still desired, VBA will not be able to consider the submitted evidence as part of the HLR, and proceed to the next step. * If *no*, proceed with the HLR process without considering the new evidence, and proceed to Step 4.   ***Note***: Document   * successful contact on *VA Form 27-0820, Report of General Information*, or * unsuccessful attempts as a permanent VBMS note. |
| 3 | Did the participant elect the supplemental claim route?   * If *yes*, refer the claim to the VSR to change the EP 682 to an EP 683, *Supplemental Claim*. * If *no*, proceed with the HLR process without considering the new evidence, and proceed to Step 4. |
| 4 | Document evidence received but not considered in the HLR by adding the following statement to the rating decision INTRODUCTION field in VBMS-R:  *The evidentiary record closed upon receipt of your election for higher-level review. VA received additional evidence after your election that was not considered as part of this decision. If you would like VA to consider this evidence, you may submit a supplemental claim within one year of the date of notice of this decision.* |

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| **n. Proper Tracking of DTA Errors** | To ensure proper tracking, when the higher-level reviewer identifies a DTA error,   * establish an EP 683 with claim label *RAMP – HLR DTA Error Rating or RAMP – HLR DTA Error Non-Rating*, * use the date of receipt of the election for higher level review as the date of claim, * list all remaining contentions, and * assign the appropriate DTA special issue to one of the contentions based on the table below. |

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| **If the DTA error involved ...** | **Then use the ...** |
| private medical records | *DTA – PMRs* special issue. |
| Federal records | *DTA – Fed Recs* special issue. |
| other records | *DTA – Other Recs* special issue. |
| an examination or medical opinion | *DTA – Exam/MO* special issue. |

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| **o. Exhibit: HLR Informal Conference Worksheet** | The following contains a sample of the *HLR Informal Conference Worksheet*. |

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#### 4. Supplemental Claims

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| **Introduction** | This topic contains information about supplemental claims, including:   * definition of * supplemental claim * new and relevant evidence * initial actions by VSR on a supplemental claim * supplemental claim decision authority * overview of the supplemental claim process, and * authority to overturn prior decision. |

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| **a. Definition: Supplemental Claim** | For the purposes of RAMP, a ***supplemental claim*** is a request by an appellant to have their appeal(s) reviewed by VBA based on additional evidence that is *new and relevant* to the benefit(s) sought.  For initial requests, VA will consider the Veteran’s submission of the RAMP Election form to be a complete application as new and relevant evidence is presumed to be of record.  For all subsequent requests, a supplemental claim must be filed on the appropriate application form with new and relevant evidence or the Veteran must identify new and relevant evidence that VA can assist in gathering, to be a complete application.  ***Note:*** VA will not decide a claim on the merits for incomplete applications. |

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| **b. Definition: New and Relevant** | ***New evidence*** means evidence not previously submitted to agency adjudicators, and ***relevant evidence*** means evidence that tends to prove or disprove a matter in issue in a claim.  ***Note:*** For purposes of RAMP, an initial election for supplemental claim will be presumed to have new and relevant evidence warranting a decision on the merits. |

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| **c. Initial Actions by VSR on a Supplemental Claim** | VSRs will conduct the initial review of the supplemental claim and take the following actions: |

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| **Step** | **Action** |
| 1 | Close VACOLS record(s) using the dispatch function and selecting withdrawn by appellant. |
| 2 | Send RAMP Withdrawal Letter in Letter Creator. |
| 3 | Enter all contentions to the EP 682. |
| 4 | Complete any additional development actions needed based on any new and relevant evidence. |
| 5 | If the participant has not submitted additional evidence yet and it has been less than 30 days since the opt-in election was received, create a custom tracked item, *RAMP Pending Evidence*, with a suspense date equivalent to the remainder of the 30-day period. |
| 6 | Once all development activity has been completed, make the claim ready to rate and refer to the RVSR. |

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| **d. Supplemental Claim Decision Authority** | Supplemental claim decisions must be issued by RVSRs. |

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| **e. Overview of the Supplemental Claim Process** | The following table is an overview of the supplemental claim process. |

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| **Stage** | **Description** |
| 1 | Determines if additional evidence requires VBA to perform duty to assist. |
| 2 | Once all duty to assist requirements are completed, issue a decision. |

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| **f. Authority to Overturn Prior Decision** | Any decision to award benefits under the supplemental claim lane must be based on new and relevant evidence or a clear and unmistakable error in the prior decision. There is no *de novo* or difference of opinion authority. |

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| **g. Review for New and Relevant Evidence** | When a Veteran first elects to participate in RAMP and selects the supplemental claim lane,   * complete a rating decision on the merits regardless of whether new and relevant evidence is of record, and * clear the appropriate end product.   For all subsequent elections to file a supplemental claim, the Veteran must submit new and relevant evidence. If no new and relevant evidence is submitted or acquired,   * notify the Veteran of his or her incomplete application for supplemental claim review, * clear the appropriate end product, and * take no further action. |

#### 5. RAMP Decision Notification Requirements

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| **Introduction** | This topic contains information about RAMP decision notification requirements, including:   * required elements of a decision notice, * definition of favorable finding, * RAMP rating decision requirements, and * RAMP decision notification requirements. |

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| **a Required Elements of a Decision Notice** | As part of RAMP, VBA will be testing the new 8-point decision notice requirements. Each decision must include:   * identification of the issues adjudicated * a summary of the evidence considered * an explanation of the laws and regulations applicable to the claim * a summary of any findings made by the adjudicator that are favorable to the claimant for denied claims, identification of the element(s) required to grant the claim(s) that were not met * if applicable, identification of the criteria that must be satisfied to grant service connection or the next higher level of compensation * an explanation of how to obtain or access evidence used in making the decision, and * a summary of the applicable review options available for the claimant to seek further review of the decision.   ***Reference:***See the ***RAMP Decision Notification Guide*** for instructions on how to address all the required elements in a rating decision. |

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| **b. Definition: Favorable Finding** | Any finding favorable to the claimant made by a VA adjudicator during RAMP, are binding on all VA adjudicators, unless rebutted by clear and unmistakable evidence to the contrary. For the purposes of this section, favorable findings are conclusions on questions of fact or application of law to facts, as established during the course of adjudicating a claim. |

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| **c. RAMP Rating Decision Requirements** | In all rating decisions issued under RAMP, insert the following text in the INTRODUCTION field in VBMS-R:  *As a result of the enactment of the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 (Public Law No: 115-55), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is required to change its current appeals process. Under the authority of Public Law No: 115-555, VA created the Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP) to provide Veterans with the earliest possible resolution of their claims. You have chosen to participate in RAMP, and you selected to have your claim reviewed under the* [**Supplemental Claim or Higher-Level Review**] *option.*  ***Reference:***See the ***RAMP Decision Notification Guide*** for instructions on how to address all the required elements identified in 5.a and 5.c. |

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| **d. RAMP Decision Notification Requirements** | The table below details the additional notification requirements for RAMP decisions.  VSRs must   * use PCGL to generate the notification letter, * Include RAMP participation statement after the salutation, * include the following enclosures:   + Rating Decision,   + “RAMP Review Rights” form in lieu of the 4107, and   + [RAMP APPLICATION FORMS], and * Replace the text under the *What You Should Do If You Disagree With Our Decision* section of the notice letter with the text identified in the table below.   ***Reference:*** See the ***RAMP Decision Notification Guide*** for a sample notification letter. |

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| **If issuing notice of a(n) ...** | **Then in the decision notice insert ...** |
| HLR decision | If you do not agree with our decision, you should write and tell us why. You have one year from the date of this letter to file one of the following options:   * File a Supplemental Claim * File an Appeal to the Board of Veterans’ Appeals   You must use the attached [Insert Form Name] form to notify us of your decision to seek further review. The [Insert Form Name] is the only form accepted by VA during RAMP.    ***Please note:*** You **may not** request a higher-level review after receiving a decision on a higher-level review or an appeal to the Board of Veterans’ Appeals.  The enclosed “*RAMP Review Rights,”* explains your options in greater detail and provides instructions on how to request further review.  If you would like to obtain or access evidence used in making this decision, please contact us by telephone, email, or letter as noted below letting us know what you would like to obtain. Some evidence may be obtained online by visiting www.eBenefits.va.gov. |
| supplemental claim decision | If you do not agree with our decision, you should write and tell us why. You have one year from the date of this letter to file one of the following options:   * File a Supplemental Claim * Request a Higher-Level Review * File an Appeal to the Board of Veterans’ Appeals   You must use the attached [Insert Form Name] form to notify us of your decision to seek further review. The [Insert Form Name] is the only form accepted by VA during RAMP.    The enclosed “RAMP Review Rights,” explains your options in greater detail and provides instructions on how to request further review.  If you would like to obtain or access evidence used in making this decision, please contact us by telephone, email, or letter as noted below letting us know what you would like to obtain. Some evidence may be obtained online by visiting www.eBenefits.va.gov. |

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| **d. RAMP Decision “Review Rights”** | | The following contains a sample of the “RAMP Review Rights” enclosure for decisions issued under RAMP.  ***Reference:*** See the ***RAMP Decision Notification Guide*** for a sample notification letter. |
| [Insert Copy of “Review Rights”] | | |

#### 6. RAMP Sample Letter Templates

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| **Introduction** | This topic contains samples of the RAMP development/notice letters content and sample paragraphs described in this SOP, including:   * RAMP Ineligible Letter, * RAMP Withdrawal Letter, * DTA Examination Letter, * RAMP DTA development letter paragraph, and * RAMP development letter paragraph. |

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| **a. RAMP Ineligible Letter** | We received your request to participate in the Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP). We cannot process your request at this time because you no longer have an appeal pending that qualifies for processing under RAMP.   * **<Insert Text for Reason for Ineligibility>**  |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Reason** | **Text** | | **No RAMP Notice Letter** | “Participation in RAMP is by invitation only. At this time, VA is not accepting self-elections. VA will notify you if and when you are eligible to participate in RAMP.” | | **No active compensation appeals (appeal decided)** | “We recently made a decision on your appeal(s). Please review that decision for more information about your appeal.” | | **No active compensation appeals (appeal withdrawn)** | “We recently received your request to withdraw your compensation appeal(s). Therefore, VA is unable to process your request to participate in RAMP at this time.” | | **Appeal(s) pending in an excluded stage** | **“**We cannot process your request at this time because your appeal has been activated by the Board of Veterans’ Appeals and no longer qualifies for processing under RAMP.” |   **If You Have Questions or Need Assistance**  If you have any questions or need assistance with this claim, you may contact us by telephone, e-mail, or letter.   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **If you** | **Here is what to do.** | | Telephone | <Contact\_Information> | | Use the Internet | Send electronic inquiries through the Internet at https://iris.va.gov. | | Write | VA now uses a centralized mail system. For all written communications, put your full name and VA file number on the letter. Please mail or fax all written correspondence to the appropriate address listed on the attached *Where to Send Your Written Correspondence.* |   In all cases, be sure to refer to your VA file number, <Vet\_File\_Number>.  If you are looking for general information about benefits and eligibility, you should visit our website at http://www.va.gov or search the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) at http://iris.va.gov.    Sincerely yours,  **Regional Office Director** |

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| **b. RAMP Withdrawal Letter** | We received your election to participate in the Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP) on <Insert Date of Receipt>. In response to your request, we have withdrawn your appeal(s) and discontinued appeals processing on the following condition(s)/issue(s):   * <INSERT issues from VACOLS>   Your appeal can no longer be reinstated under the current appeals process.  You elected to have the above noted condition(s)/issue(s) reviewed under the [INSERT higher-level review or supplemental claim] lane.  We will review your claim and provide you with a new decision based on the review option selected. If we need additional information from you or find an error in the processing of your claim, we will notify you.  **If You Have Questions or Need Assistance**  If you have any questions or need assistance with this claim, you may contact us by telephone, e-mail, or letter.   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **If you** | **Here is what to do.** | | Telephone | <Contact\_Information> | | Use the Internet | Send electronic inquiries through the Internet at https://iris.va.gov. | | Write | VA now uses a centralized mail system. For all written communications, put your full name and VA file number on the letter. Please mail or fax all written correspondence to the appropriate address listed on the attached *Where to Send Your Written Correspondence.* |   In all cases, be sure to refer to your VA file number, <Vet\_File\_Number>.  If you are looking for general information about benefits and eligibility, you should visit our website at http://www.va.gov or search the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) at http://iris.va.gov.  Sincerely yours,  **Regional Office Director** |

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| **c. DTA Examination Letter** | We are currently working on your claim.  You elected to participate in the Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP) and have your claim reviewed in the Higher-Level Review lane. We completed your request for higher-level review, and discovered an error in our duty to assist in gathering evidence in support of your claim. We will take action to correct our error and forward your claim to the rating activity for further processing under RAMP.  **If You Have Questions or Need Assistance**  If you have any questions or need assistance with this claim, you may contact us by telephone, e-mail, or letter.   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **If you** | **Here is what to do.** | | Telephone | <Contact\_Information> | | Use the Internet | Send electronic inquiries through the Internet at https://iris.va.gov. | | Write | VA now uses a centralized mail system. For all written communications, put your full name and VA file number on the letter. Please mail or fax all written correspondence to the appropriate address listed on the attached *Where to Send Your Written Correspondence.* |   In all cases, be sure to refer to your VA file number, <Vet\_File\_Number>.  If you are looking for general information about benefits and eligibility, you should visit our website at http://www.va.gov or search the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) at http://iris.va.gov.  Sincerely yours,  **Regional Office Director** |

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| **d. RAMP DTA Development Letter Paragraph** | Insert the following paragraph at the top of the development letter sent to the Veteran during RAMP because of identification of a duty to assist error.  *You elected to participate in the Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP) and have your claim reviewed in the Higher-Level Review lane. We completed your request for higher-level review, and discovered an error in our duty to assist in gathering evidence in support of your claim. We will take action to correct our error and forward your claim to the rating activity for further processing under RAMP.*  ***Reference:*** For DTA errors resulting in an examination use the “DTA Examination Letter” template. |

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| **e. RAMP Development Letter Paragraph** | Insert the following paragraph at the top of any development letter sent to the Veteran during RAMP.  *You elected to participate in the Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP) The following development actions are processed under RAMP.*  ***Reference:*** For development letters sent as a result of a duty to assist error identified during a higher-level review, see section 6.e. |