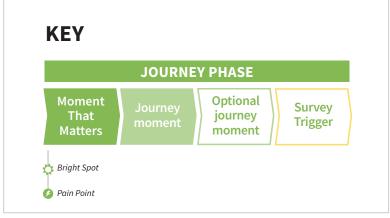


## **APPLYING FOR SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITY COMPENSATION**

The process of applying for and receiving disability compensation benefits involves the following phases: filing for disability compensation, going for Compensation and Pension (C+P) exams (when applicable), and getting results. This map looks at the steps Veterans and Service members take when filing original service-connected disability claims or supplemental claims. Field work and interviews with employees, Veterans, and active Service-members revealed attitudes of unfairness and inconsistencies in the process.

The voices of Veterans (some of whom were also NSOs) and Service-members are captured in the Pain Points section of the map below. Some claimants believe that they are likely to get a better rating with VA examiners than with non-VA examiners and that a successful rating is about knowing the right words to put in the form. Many claimants needed more education and support throughout the process. Due to receiving varying information from different partner organizations or employees, claimants sometimes jumped from source to source resulting in an elongated process and decreased trust.



\*Data Source: Monthly Workload from PA&I, CAPRI Report, and VBA Claims Reports: benefits.va.gov/REPORTS/detailed claims data.asp as of July 5, 2017

**TRIGGERS Decide to Retire/Separate** Get Injured and Can No Longer Serve **Condition Begins to Flare Up Condition Gets Worse** 

\*28% Fully Developed Claim | Average Time: 113 days % IN THIS PHASE \*60% Experience this phase \*100% Experience this phase 72% Standard Claim | Average Time: 135 days 52% Contracted Exam | 48% Veterans Health Administration Exams FILING A SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITY CLAIM ATTENDING C + P EXAMS **GETTING RESULTS JOURNEY PHASE** Reconsideration Apply for Complete WHAT OCCURS IN Receive a **Give More** ravel Voucher Wait for Prepare to **Get Examined** Wait **Accept My Results** Get Scheduled Go to Exams Check-In **Additional** Check out **Submit Claim** Wait **Decision Letter** THIS MOMENT Information File and Leave the Decision Exams Facility **Appeal** "I got to VHA for one The call center It's been too long I didn't even get a "First few times, got "I checked benefits since I separated but they don't update exam and didn't doctor, I got a nurse. wasn't helpful when I denied. I didn't and I can't find my it. Not helpful." realize I had another wanted to check my appeal, didn't know records. one that same day." status. // "I couldn't I had to come into understand the "I didn't know I could Public Contact to find examiner's accent." "What's frustrating is "You may need to be They scheduled me file for the things I that I never found told no several times out where my claim out the results of before you prevail." "I felt rushed. How the test." "I send my Veterans to can they determine I don't understand 🔼 I don't know the best something so Hospital A because I The call center was "eBenefits doesn't important in five way to share my know they give these medical terms not helpful. They tell you much." minutes?" paperwork. didn't spend time favorable audiology PAIN ratings there and with me. "I didn't get the never at Hospital B." **POINTS** Initial decision was "My VSO gave me documentation in "The staff are racist." fast - reconsideration time to respond so I bad advice." "This is like hurry up "To feel like if you takes forever. got denied." and jump through miss one piece of "Outside doctors are hoops." The person helping mail, your claim won't sympathetic to "They told me it wasn't me didn't word my happen, it's veterans but they claim correctly. service-related, but I distressing." don't understand was in Somalia and there's been a Vietnam." history and this is a "I'm using a VSO. VA "I found out about my re-evaluation." isn't your advocate." appointment the day Doctor didn't know how to word my "I forgot my login." I need time to plan decisions and I got for daycare and to denied. take off work. My time is worth something." THIS MOMENT **Determining eligibility and** Veterans don't know what to **Inconsistent scheduling** Often a first touch-point with Veterans forget the role exams Veterans have a preconceived **MATTERS** VA, feeling like the exam played which causes confusion. notion of what they will get and gathering records can be expect from the process or what practices create concerns of BECAUSE... process has integrity is critical confusing. do not know their options. happens next. unfairness and stress. to confidence in VA. WHAT GOOD Claimants are proactive and know Claimants expect they may be Claimants are contacted via their Claimants are updated on the status Claimants understand verbiage in Claimants experience a consistent how to find out their eligibility, how preferred channel and given their experience with uniform protocols contacted for an exam and know of their claim via their preferred letter and know their rights and **LOOKS LIKE** to write their claim, and where to how long it may take. due notice. across contracted and VHA exams. channel. options. get help. - Fairness of Decision Clear Directions - Expectation Management - Timeliness of appointment - Facility Cleanliness – Meaningful Communication **KEY** - Examiner Empathy

**EXPERIENCE DRIVERS** 

- Expectation Management

– Ease of Digital System

- Competent Support

– Ease of getting there

– Expectation Management - Respectful Staff

Office Staff

- Respectful Staff Courtesy

- Expectation Management

- Clarity of Explanation

 Education of Next Steps Developed by the Veterans Experience Office with the Veterans Benefits Administration.

For more information contact: Vets-Experience@VA.gov