

Overview of how to file for VA disability

Step 1: Intent to file

Link(s) : <https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-0966-ARE.pdf> - **Hardcopy**
<https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/?from=explore.va.gov> - **Online**

This is what you fill out before filing with the VA. This will give you one year to gather or request medical records, personal affidavits from former military personnel, or other relevant documents. Visuals of this form can be found in the “Intent to file walkthrough” section below.

When you submit this the clock will start ticking, which is what you want to do. If you file this form on 01Jan2021 and your 526EZ form (seen below) is submitted on 01Dec2021 and your file is approved, then you would be back paid for those approved items back to 01Jan2021. If you do not submit it and you are approved, then you will only get back paid to 01Dec2021. (For example: If you get a 10% rating, then you could get back paid 11 months at \$142. That adds up to \$1,562 for 5 minutes of your time!)

Step 2: Request your military records

Link(s) : <https://vetrecs.archives.gov/VeteranRequest/home.html> - **Online**

Use this link to be taken directly to the online Veteran Records Request website

Step 3: Full VA form 21-526EZ

Links(s) : <https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-526EZ-ARE.pdf> - **Hardcopy**
<https://www.va.gov/disability/file-disability-claim-form-21-526ez/introduction> - **Online**

With the hardcopy version of form 21-526EZ, on page 3, section 4 you will need find the mailing address, fax number, and the web address of the online form.

With the online version of form 21-526EZ, when you submit your form, we’ve found one practice that seems to work very well. The steps are as follows:

1. Have a personal summary page
2. Have a summary of all your issues
3. Add page references from your issue summary to your medical records
4. Add page numbers to your medical records
5. **Online only:** Scan the pages in 10- to 25-page batches
6. **Mail-in only:** **Do not** send originals, only send copies

Important Note: On the first page of each submission/document batch you will need to make sure your VA Service Number or Social Security Number is clearly visible. **You will be rejected if you do not.**

Helpful Links

Aid & Attendance/Nursing Home/Care Provider –

<https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-0779-ARE.pdf>

Survivor of a Veteran Dependency form –

<https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21P-534EZ-ARE.pdf>

Right to Appeal –

<https://www.va.gov/vaforms/va/pdf/VA4107.pdf>

Notice of Disagreement –

<https://www.va.gov/decision-reviews/?from=explore.va.gov>

VA Property Tax Exemptions by State –

(Please note, this is a private website, not a Gov site. There may be changes in your state!)

<https://www.veteransunited.com/futurehomeowners/veteran-property-tax-exemptions-by-state/>

Compensation rates –

<https://www.va.gov/disability/compensation-rates/veteran-rates/>

CFR 38 Ratings & Categories –

(Please note, this is a Gov site, and navigating it is very challenging. Each subsection needs to be downloaded and read as a Word document separately.)

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2018-title38-vol1/xml/CFR-2018-title38-vol1-part4.xml#seqnum4.71a>

VA Disability Rating –

<https://www.va.gov/disability/view-disability-rating/>

eBenefits Rating page –

<https://eauth.va.gov/ebenefits/disabilities>

MyHealth eVet portal –

(Please note, this site may require you to go to a VA hospital or outpatient clinic to complete registration.)

<https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/web/myhealthvet/user-registration>

Summary & Submission Pages

The following page is a Summary Page layout that I used to submit my package. Remember, when you add your medical records, personal statements, letters from others, etc., put them into a PDF format so they can be uploaded to the VA website.

VA Service Number (SS#): 123-45-6789

Cover Page for VA Disability Submission

First M. Last

Last 4: 6789

Total of Pages including cover page

1: Cover Page

2: Summary

3-xx (last page): File Information

This is how a sample of how the Spreadsheet could be laid out and has proven to be successful. I utilized my initial health rating when I got in, gave a summary of my current health, and then started in on the actual injuries:

Item	Summary of Injury	Notes
1	Initial Health (p 8)	Near perfect health. PULHES = all 1's APFT Jun 2002= 260
2	Current Health (p 8)	This is focused on my back, feet and knees, along with my quality of life. Please reference the letters (p 25 & 26) from my family members who help me with daily living activities. The inability to have a 'normal' life, to include picking up my young kids, running, etc. has lead to a significant decrease in my level of daily happiness & increased my level of depression when I have an episode. Included in this section is my latest rating decision.
8	L-Spine (p 34)	8Jun2017: Diagnosis of Spondylosis and facet arthrosis at L3/L4, L4/L5, L5/S1 (p 46) Disc measurements are: L3-L4 No rupture/ herniation- 3mm herniation (p 35, 40,49) L4-L5 No measurable Bulge to 7x13mm prolapse (p 35, 40, 42, 43, 44, 45, 49, 54,55) L5-S1 No rupture/ herniation- 7mm herniation (p 35, 40, 41, 42, 44, 45, 49, 54,55) Recent Periods of Incapacitation: May 2019: 3 weeks, Oct 2019: 3 weeks, Nov 2019: 3 weeks, Jan 2020: 2 weeks Feb 2020: 3 weeks, Mar 2020: 1 week Daily Life: 1. Back has gotten significantly worse. The pain is so extreme that I am unable to move, have to wait a few minutes and then try to shift to a less painful position in order to move. Most noticeable is in the sitting position. Note: this comment is repeated in 3 sections because it will occur in my back, right leg or left leg, but typically only one at a time. Occurs randomly and multiple times a day. 2. I can only shift forward about 1-2 inches. 3. Walk with an awkward gait & my back is regularly shifted to the right (see pictures p57) 4. I require daily living assistance now (dressing & getting in or out of bed) & utilize crutches on a regular basis (p 56). 5. Had to switch careers from a global project manager to a desk job because I am no longer able to travel on a weekly basis due to my injuries. I took a 40% pay cut in the process.

FULL LAYOUT/ BREAKDOWN

To help the VA process your package, lay out each section of your claim by body part:

1. Initial Health
2. Current Health
3. Head-Physical
4. Head-Mental
5. Left Arm
6. Right Arm
7. Torso-All except Spine and reproductive parts
8. Torso-Spine
9. Torso-Reproductive
10. Left Leg (including feet)
11. Right Leg (including feet)

Intent to File Walkthrough

To get to the INTENT TO FILE page:

1. Go to <https://www.va.gov/disability/file-disability-claim-form-21-526ez/start>
2. Click 'If you know VA Form 21-526EZ is right, apply now'

File for disability compensation

Equal to VA Form 21-526EZ

Is this the form I need?

Use this form to file for disability benefits for an illness or injury that was caused by—or got worse because of—your active military service. If you're still on active duty, you can file for disability benefits under the Benefits Delivery at Discharge program. This program allows you to file for benefits 180 to 90 days before you leave the military.

Not sure you're eligible for VA disability benefits? [Find out if you're eligible for disability compensation](#)

Answer a few questions to get started.

Are you on active duty right now?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Already know this is the right form?

If you know VA Form 21-526EZ is correct, or if you were directed to complete this application, you can go straight to the application without answering the questions above.

[If you know VA Form 21-526EZ is right, apply now](#)

3. Click on the green button 'Start the Disability Compensation Application'

[Home](#) > [Disability Benefits](#) > **File for disability compensation with VA Form 21-526EZ**

File for disability compensation with VA Form 21-526EZ

Equal to VA Form 21-526EZ (Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits).

Note: Since you're signed in to your account, we can prefill part of your application based on your account details. You can also save your application in progress and come back later to finish filling it out.

Start the Disability Compensation Application »

4. You should arrive at a page that says your intent to file request has been submitted. Now the clock is ticking, and you have one year to complete your 'fully developed claim' submission.
 - a. **NOTE:** This 'submission' window is for you, the Veteran, to get your paperwork filled out with medical records and submitted to the VA. This does NOT mean that you have to have been seen by the VA or its representative to evaluate your claim, as that can go beyond the 1-year mark without concern of the clock resetting.

[Home](#) > [Disability Benefits](#) > **File for disability compensation**

File for disability compensation

✓

Your Intent to File request has been submitted

Thank you for submitting your Intent to File request for disability compensation. Your Intent to File will expire on October 23, 2022.

Please note: We found a previous Intent to File request in our records that expired on April 10, 2021. This ITF might have been from an application you started, but didn't finish before the ITF expired. Or, it could have been from a claim you already submitted.

[What is an Intent to File?](#) ▼

Continue

If you have questions, comments, or especially corrections/ mistakes, please email me at any time. I will be happy to set aside some time to talk to you about the process. I only ask that you do not disclose any personal information such as SS#, medical records, etc. If you have questions about a possible disability, then I will discuss that with you, but I try to limit the conversation to one like you would have with a stranger at a bar or standing in a grocery line (when you were in, how long, what your job was, an injury you might have sustained).

Thanks,

John

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