

# program

Find out how you can use the Fully Developed Claims program to get a faster decision on your disability benefits claim by submitting evidence along with your claim.

## Can I submit a fully developed disability claim?

**You can submit a fully developed disability claim if you're applying for compensation for:**

- An illness or injury (also called a condition) that was caused by—or got worse because of—your active-duty service, **or**
- A condition that was caused—or made worse—by a disability we've already determined is service-connected

## What do I need to do to submit a fully developed claim?

**For us to consider your claim fully developed, you'll need to:**

- Submit your completed Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits (VA Form 21-526EZ), **and**
- Submit all the evidence (supporting documents) you have—or can easily get—along with your claim, **and**
- Certify that there's no more evidence we might need to decide your claim, **and**
- Go to any VA medical exams required for us to decide your claim. We'll let you know if you need any exams.

# What evidence will I need to submit along with my disability claim?

## You'll need to send us:

- All private medical records related to the claimed condition, like reports from your own doctor or X-rays or other test results from a non-VA hospital or other treatment center, **and**
- Any records of medical treatment you've received for the claimed condition while serving in the military, **and**
- Any military personnel records you have that relate to the claimed condition, **and**
- Information about any related health records that you don't have but that we can request on your behalf from a federal facility like a VA medical center or clinic

**If you think your service records don't include a description of your disability**, you can also submit letters 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.

**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. If your records were destroyed in this fire, you can get help reconstructing them.

[Find out how to reconstruct your records \(https://www.va.gov/records/get-military-service-records/reconstruct-records\)](https://www.va.gov/records/get-military-service-records/reconstruct-records)

## Are there any risks to using the Fully Developed Claims program?

No. Filing a fully developed claim won't affect the attention we give to your claim or the benefits you're entitled to receive.

[Learn what the PACT Act means for your VA benefits >](#)

If we determine that we need other non-federal records to make a decision on your claim, we'll simply remove the claim from the Fully Developed Claims program and process it as a standard claim.

Once you start your fully developed claim, you'll have up to 1 year to complete it. If we approve your claim, you'll be paid back to the day you started it.

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

This depends on the type of claim you're filing.

[Check what evidence is needed for different types of claims](https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/evidence-needed/)  
(<https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/evidence-needed/>).

## Can VA help me gather evidence?

Yes. We can help you gather evidence for the Fully Developed Claims program in these ways:

- We'll request your military service records (with your permission), **and**
- We'll request relevant Social Security benefits information and medical records that you identify and authorize us to get from a federal facility, like a VA medical center, **and**
- We'll schedule a health exam for you or get a medical opinion from a health care provider if we decide we need it for your claim

**Note:** Even though we'll gather federal records (like your DD214 or VA medical records) on your behalf, we encourage you to submit these if you have them to save time in the process.

## When should I turn in my evidence?

[Learn what the PACT Act means for your VA benefits >](#)

To submit your claim through the Fully Developed Claims program, you'll need to turn in the information and evidence at the same time as you file your claim. If you turn in more information or evidence after you send in your fully developed claim, we'll remove your claim from the FDC program and process it as a standard claim.

If we decide your claim before 1 year from the date we receive the claim, you'll have the rest of that 1-year period to turn in additional information or evidence to support your claim.

## How do I turn in my information and evidence?

You'll need to upload all medical evidence or supporting documents at the end of the disability compensation form.

You can start your online application right now, or find out how to file a claim by mail, in person, or with the help of a trained professional.

[Find out how to file a claim for disability compensation](https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/)  
(<https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/>).

## Should I work with a Veterans Service Officer (VSO) to file my claim?

You don't have to, but we encourage you to work with an accredited VSO. These trained professionals can help you file your claim and gather the needed medical records and evidence.

[Find out how to get help filing your claim](https://www.va.gov/disability/get-help-filing-claim/) (<https://www.va.gov/disability/get-help-filing-claim/>).

## More information about disability claims

---

[Learn what the PACT Act means for your VA benefits >](#)

### **[Pre-discharge claim \(https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/when-to-file/pre-discharge-claim\)](https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/when-to-file/pre-discharge-claim)**

Learn how to file a disability claim through the Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) program.

### **[Exposure to hazardous chemicals and materials \(https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materials-exposure\)](https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materials-exposure)**

Learn more about claims for conditions related to contact with hazardous materials.

### **[Disability benefits for former prisoners of war \(POWs\) \(https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/former-pows\)](https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/former-pows)**

Learn more about claims for former prisoners of war (POWs).

### **[Special claims \(https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/special-claims\)](https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/special-claims)**

Learn more about other special claims.

---

Last updated: October 12, 2022