**https://www.va.gov/decision-reviews/higher-level-review/**

**Word Count: 952**

**Higher-Level Reviews**

Meta: If you disagree with a VA decision, you or your representative can request a new review of your case by a higher-level reviewer. The reviewer will determine whether an error or a difference of opinion changes the decision. You can’t submit new evidence with a Higher-Level Review.

**Can I request a Higher-Level Review?**

You can request a Higher-Level Review of an initial claim or Supplemental Claim decision. You have 1 year from the date on your decision letter to request a Higher-Level Review.

**Note:** You can’t request a Higher-Level Review after a previous Higher-Level Review or Board Appeal on the same claim. And you can’t request a Higher-Level Review if you have a contested claim.

[Learn more about contested claims](https://www.va.gov/decision-reviews/contested-claims) (in English)

**How long does a Higher-Level Review take?**

Our goal for completing Higher-Level Reviews is an average of 125 days (4 to 5 months).

**Note:** If you ask for an informal conference as part of your Higher-Level Review, it may take us longer to complete. Instead, you may want to consider submitting a written statement with your application to tell us about the errors you’ve identified. This will help us make a decision faster.

**What’s an informal conference?**

An informal conference is a call with the higher-level reviewer for your case. If you choose to have an informal conference, the reviewer will call to schedule a time to discuss your case with you. They’ll call the phone number that you provided on the Higher-Level Review form.

During the call, you or your representative can identify errors and discuss why you think the decision should change. You can’t submit new evidence.

If no one answers when the higher-level reviewer calls, they’ll leave a voicemail. If they can’t leave a message or make contact after 2 attempts, they’ll review and decide your case without an informal conference.

**How do I ask for an informal conference?**

If you want a call with a higher-level reviewer, you’ll need to choose the informal conference option when you request a Higher-Level Review.

You’ll need to choose either a morning or afternoon time frame for your call. You’ll also need to choose whether you want us to call you or your representative. If you’d like us to call your representative, fill in their name and phone number.

**If you request a Higher-Level Review online,** you can ask for an informal conference in step 3 of the online form.

**If you request a Higher-Level Review by mail or in person,** you can ask for an informal conference by marking the circle in item 16A on VA Form 20-0996.

**Note:**You can have only one informal conference for each Higher-Level Review. Make sure you have the information you want to talk about with the reviewer ready. Prepare to explain any errors in your case.

**How do I request a Higher-Level Review?**

**For disability compensation claims,** you can request a Higher-Level Review online right now.

[**Request a Higher-Level Review**](https://www.va.gov/decision-reviews/higher-level-review/request-higher-level-review-form-20-0996)(in English)

**Note:** For other types of claims, you’ll need to request a Higher-Level Review either by mail or in person.

**Other ways to request a Higher-Level Review**

**By mail**

Fill out the Decision Review Request: Higher-Level Review (VA Form 20-0996).

[Get VA Form 20-0996 to download](https://www.va.gov/find-forms/about-form-20-0996) (in English)

Send the completed form to the benefit office that matches the benefit type you selected on the form.

* Disability compensation

Department of Veterans Affairs  
Claims Intake Center  
PO Box 4444  
Janesville, WI 53547-4444

* Life insurance

Department of Veterans Affairs  
Attention: Insurance Center  
PO Box 5209  
Janesville, WI 53547

* Pension and survivor benefits

Department of Veterans Affairs  
Claims Intake Center  
PO Box 5365  
Janesville, WI 53547-5192

* All other benefit types  
    
  Check the decision letter for your initial claim for instructions on how to submit the form.

**In person**

Fill out the Decision Review Request: Higher-Level Review (VA Form 20-0996).

[Get VA Form 20-0996 to download](https://www.va.gov/find-forms/about-form-20-0996) (in English)

Bring your completed form to a VA regional office near you.

[Find your nearest VA regional office](https://www.va.gov/find-locations/?facilityType=benefits) (in English)

You can also ask a regional benefit office for a copy of this form. Or call us at [800-827-1000](tel:+18008271000) ([TTY: 711](tel:711)) to request a form. We’re here Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. ET.

**Helpful information for filling out your form**

Keep reading for help completing certain sections of the Decision Review Request: Higher-Level Review (VA Form 20-0996).

**Section III: Select a benefit type**

The most common benefit type is compensation. If you’re unsure, check your VA decision. You can’t select multiple benefit types. You have to complete a separate form for each type.

**Section VI: List the issues you want us to review**

You’ll need to list the issues you disagree with and the VA decision date for each. You can include all or just some of the issues we’ve decided, but they must all be within the same benefit type.

**Note:** You can’t submit any evidence.

**What if I have new and relevant evidence?**

If you have evidence to submit, please select another decision review option.

[Learn more about the decision review options](https://www.va.gov/decision-reviews) (in English)

**What happens next?**

[Find out what happens after you request a decision review](https://www.va.gov/decision-reviews/after-you-request-review)

You don’t need to do anything while you wait, unless VA sends you a letter asking for more information. If VA schedules exams for you, be sure not to miss them.

If you’ve filed a request for a Higher-Level Review, we may randomly select you to receive an email with a short, optional survey. If selected, you’ll get a survey about a week after we receive your initial claim. You’ll get a second survey about a week after you receive your decision notification letter. You aren’t required to fill out either survey, but your feedback will help us improve the decision review process. It takes about 3 minutes to answer the questions. Please review your VA.gov profile to make sure we have your most recent email address.