

# **VA CLAIM FILING MADE EASY**

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Filing a claim with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) can be a complex process or you can follow the steps below to make it an easy process. This presentation assumes that a veteran or family member of a veteran (claimant) has a legitimate reason for filing a claim with the VA. If the claimant goes to [www.benefits.va.gov/](http://www.benefits.va.gov/), "Applying For Benefits", there are nine benefits listed and 15 different forms listed that should be filed with the VA. This presentation will deal with filing a disability compensation claim with the VA although STEP ONE below is essential with "ANY" VA claim.

**STEP ONE:** The claimant should carefully choose a person or organization (VSO) to represent you when you are going to file a claim. The VSO'S EXPERIENCE is essential. Ask what a POWER OF ATTORNEY (POA) will allow your representative to do on your behalf. COMMUNICATE regularly with your representative. GET A COPY of all documents used in your claim. Place the documents in a SAFE, EASILY ACCESSIBLE LOCATION.

**STEP TWO:** Your VSO will file VA Form 21-0966, titled "Intent To File a Compensation and/or Pension, or Survivors Pension and/or DIC" (Mar 2017). If your representative faxes the form, it will be accompanied by the "Centralized Intake Coversheet" and sent to Janesville, Wisconsin, the VA Claims Intake Center. If you have an eBenefits premium account, you can upload the documents on that web site. If your VSO mails the document, be sure it is sent certified return receipt requested and you can track the information as to when it is received.

**STEP THREE:** Your VSO will then help you complete VA Form 21-526EZ, titled "Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits" (Feb 2016). Your military and VA records can be used in completing the form. Again, keep a copy of all documents that are submitted to the VA. The information can be sent the same way as in STEP TWO. You will submit pages 7-10 of VA Form 21-526EZ and ITEM 26 on page 10 indicates you DO or DO NOT want the claim considered for rapid processing.

**STEP FOUR:** You generally have one year from the time you submit VA 21-0966 (see STEP TWO) to complete the submission of evidence in support of your claim if you "checked" box 26 on page 10 of VA Form 21-526EZ. Evidence can be in your military or VA records, including your DD-214, or it can be "lay statements", or if you have a private doctor that has completed a DISABILITY BENEFIT QUESTIONNAIRE (DBQ) for you. Information can be sent as in STEP TWO. Results will be prompt. The VA will send you a letter acknowledging the date of the receipt of your VA 21-0966. You may be asked to go to a "VA contracted" doctor to substantiate your claim. Be on time and be respectful during the exam. Once you receive your "RATING DECISION LETTER", go back to your VSO for additional advice and possible benefits.

[www.VVA1069.org](http://www.VVA1069.org) is the web site of my Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 1069.