### Section C: Overview of Veterans Online Application (VONAPP) Direct Connect (VDC) Rating Claims

#### Overview

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| **In This Section** | This section contains the following topics: |

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| **Topic** | **Topic Name** |
| 1 | VDC Rating Claims Intake |
| 2 | Determining the Date of Claim and Effective Date for VDC Claims |

#### 1. VDC Rating Claims Intake

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| **Introduction** | This topic contains information regarding intake of rating claims submitted through VDC   * workload management for VDC claims * review of VDC claims * additional action required from the station of jurisdiction (SOJ) * Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) exclusions on VDC claims * incremental end products (EPs) on VDC claims * incremental EP consolidation on VDC claims, and * pre-discharge claims received through VDC. |

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| **Change Date** | June 26, 2015 |

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| **a. Workload Management for VDC Claims** | Each regional office (RO) must designate one or more employees to run a daily report detailing all claims with the *VONAPP Direct Connect* special issue. The purpose of this report is to capture newly established Veterans Online Application (VONAPP) Direct Connect (VDC) claims needing Intake Processing Center (IPC) review. Once generated provide the daily report to the locally designated personnel in the IPC. |

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| **b. Review of VDC Claims** | Upon receipt of the VDC report, the designated IPC personnel reviews all original and supplemental claims taking the steps outlined in the table below. |

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| **Step** | **Action** |
| 1 | Is the claim an exclusion from Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) processing?   * If *yes*, follow the instructions outlined in M21-1, Part III, Subpart i, 4.C.1.d. * If *no*, proceed to Step 2.   ***Reference***: For more information on VBMS exclusions, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 3.D.1. |
| 2 | Is there a paper claims folder in the RO and/or paper source material submitted in support of the VDC claim for this claimant?   * If *yes*, pull the claims folder and other paper material(s), and ship to the document conversion services contractor; proceed to Step 4. * If *no*, proceed to Step 3.   ***Reference***: For more information on determining the claims folder format and requests for scanning of paper claims folders, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 3.B.1. |
| 3 | Is there a paper claims folder located at another RO?   * If *yes*, * follow the guidance found in M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 3.B.1.f to request conversion of the paper claims folder * send out for scanning any paper material received in support of the claim, and * proceed to Step 4. * If *no*, proceed to Step 4.   ***Reference***: For more information on determining the claims folder format, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 3.B.1.h. |
| 4 | Verify the correct end product (EP) was established and   * correct if necessary * establish a two-day suspense date, selecting the *Pending Initial Development* suspense reason and update accordingly, and * leave appeals and other non-incremental or non-rating EPs pending (dependency, routine future exams, etc.).   ***Reference***: For more information on EPs, see M21-4, Appendix B. |
| 5 | Verify the claim label. If necessary correct the claim label using the options found in M21-1, Part III, Subpart i, 4.A.1.d.  ***Note***: All claims received through VDC should maintain an eBenefits claim label throughout the life of the claim. |
| 6 | Perform a thorough review of the Beneficiary Identification Records Locator Subsystem (BIRLS) record. If an error message is received or two records for the same Veteran are found, refer to M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 4.E for procedures to correct the records. |
| 7 | Does the claim fall under one of the exceptions to the RO’s jurisdiction, per M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 5.D.1.a?   * If *yes*, transfer the claim to the correct station of jurisdiction (SOJ) in VBMS. * If *no*, refer to additional action required from the SOJ in M21-1, Part III, Subpart i, 4.C.1.c.   ***Note***: Effective June 22, 2015, the RO first receiving a claim, to include in the centralized mail (CM) portal, is responsible for establishing the claim under local jurisdiction and working the claim to completion, unless directed otherwise by the Office of Field Operations (OFO), or the claim falls under one of the recognized exclusions.  ***Reference***: For information on   * conditions for permanent transfer of claims folders, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 5.D.1.a * permanent transfers of paper claims folders, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 5.E, and * transferring electronic claims and eFolders, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii.5.G. |

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| **c. Additional Action Required From the SOJ** | In addition to the preliminary steps outlined in M21-1, Part III, Subpart i, 4.C.1.b, the SOJ must take the following steps. |

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| **Step** | **Action** |
| 1 | If the eFolder was transferred in from another RO, follow the procedure in M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 5.G.2.b to transfer-in the eFolder; otherwise, proceed to Step 2. |
| 2 | Update Share to ensure the claimant’s record has the *VBMS* corporate flash appended. If the application is an original claim, ensure the *No Paper Claim Folder* flash is appended when a paper claims folder did not previously exist. |
| 3 | Review the claim in the eFolder and any supporting documentation uploaded by the claimant, and take the following actions   * manage received evidence in VBMS * assign the proper segmented lane in VBMS * add the segmented lane special issue flash to the first listed contention, and * if the claimant opts into the Fully Developed Claim (FDC) program, update the claim with the appropriate FDC flash.   ***References***: For more information on   * the FDC program, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart i, 3.B * segmented lane criteria, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 3.D.7, and * managing evidence in VBMS, see the [VBMS Job Instruction Sheet – Manage Evidence](http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/VBMS/Resources_Job_Instruction_Sheets.asp). |

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| **d. VBMS Exclusions on VDC Claims** | VDC does not screen claims to determine if it meets VBMS claims processing criteria. If VDC establishes a claim in VBMS that is an exclusion, per M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 3.D.1, follow the guidance in the table below. |

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| **Step** | **Action** |
| 1 | Remove the *VBMS* and *No Paper Claim Folder* flashes, if appended to the record. |
| 2 | Create a paper folder, as applicable.  ***Note***: Do not create a paper folder for a *PLCP* claim (Virtual VA paperless claim). |
| 3 | Print the evidence from the VBMS eFolder, and incorporate it into the claims folder.  ***Note***: For a *PLCP* claim, upload the evidence to the Virtual VA eFolder. |
| 4 | Process the claim according to established procedures for paper claims using legacy systems. |

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| **e. Incremental EPs on VDC Claims** | Claimants may submit up to nine additional disability claims electronically while a VDC claim is pending. Upon submission of these claims, VDC will establish incremental EPs in the 400 series.  ***Note***: Automatic establishment of incremental EPs only apply to claims submitted through VDC. Do not manually establish a 400 series EP for this purpose. |

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| **f. Incremental EP Consolidation on VDC Claims** | If a 400 series EP is established by VDC, the contention and evidence submitted with that subsequent submission must be consolidated into the pending primary VDC claim. The incremental EPs must be reconciled during the IPC process review using the table below. |

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| **Step** | **Action** |
| 1 | Copy all contentions from the incremental EP 400 to the primary EP (010, 110, 020 series). |
| 2 | Ensure proper date of receipt and special issue, as applicable, are entered for each contention.  ***Note***: The special issue of the assigned segmented lane must be added to the first contention. |
| 3 | Update evidence under the primary EP. |
| 4 | Review the VA Form 21-526EZ, to include the FDC certification. Update the FDC flash if applicable. |
| 5 | PCAN the incremental 400 series EP(s) associated with the primary EP. |

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| **g. Pre-Discharge Claims Received Through VDC** | VDC accepts pre-discharge claims (excluding Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) claims). Acceptable pre-discharge claims fall into two categories   * Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD), and * Quick Start.   ***Note***: Upon receipt of a pre-discharge claim through VDC, follow the VONAPP guidance found in M21-1, Part III, Subpart i, 2.B.3.e. |

#### 2. Determining the Date of Claim and Effective Date for VDC Claims

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| **Introduction** | This topic contains information regarding the determination of the date of claim and effective date for VDC claims, including   * date stamp for claims submitted electronically * date of claim for VDC claims * application initiation date, and * determining the effective date for VDC claims. |

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| **Change Date** | June 26, 2015 |

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| **a. Date Stamp for Claims Submitted Electronically** | Once a claim is submitted through eBenefits, VDC will time stamp the application and note the claim was submitted electronically on the top left corner of the application. |

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| **b. Date of Claim for VDC Claims** | Upon submission, VDC automatically establishes the EP with the date of claim matching the submission date. |

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| **c. Application Initiation Date** | A claimant has up to one year to complete and submit an application once it is initiated in VDC. The application initiated date is recorded in the *VA Date Stamp* box on the top right corner of the application. |

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| **d. Determining the Effective Date for VDC Claims** | For the purpose of determining the effective date, decision makers should consider the *application initiated* or *intent to file (ITF)* date as the date of claim.  Applications created through VDC on or after March 24, 2015, will not contain an application initiation date, as the application initiation date will be captured as an ITF in accordance with the Standard Claims and Appeals Forms Rule.  ***Note***: The application initiated or ITF date should not be entered into Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) electronic systems as the date of claim.  ***Reference***: For more information regarding the ITF process, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii.2.D. |