### Section B. Migration of Service Records and the Procedures for Obtaining Them

#### Overview

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

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| Topic | Topic Name |
| 1 | General Information About Locating Service Records |
| 2 | Migration of Service Treatment Records (STRs) |
| 3 | Procedures for Obtaining STRs |
| 4 | Locating and Obtaining Army Official Military Personnel Files (OMPFs) |
| 5 | Locating and Obtaining Navy Personnel Records |
| 6 | Locating and Obtaining Air Force Personnel Records |
| 7 | Locating and Obtaining Marine Corps Personnel Records |
| 8 | Locating and Obtaining Coast Guard Service Records |

#### 1. General Information About Locating Service Records

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| Introduction | This topic contains general information about locating service records, including* basic elements in securing Veterans’ service records
* determining whether a Veteran has an additional service obligation
* service records destroyed in a fire at the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC)
* requesting service records from alternate sources, and
* updating the contact information of service record custodians.
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| Change Date | July 23, 2015 |

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| a. Basic Elements in Securing Veterans’ Service Records | In order to successfully secure Veterans’ service records, regional office (RO) employees responsible for this development activity must* carefully consider a variety of factors that affect where service departments route service records after a service member’s period of service ends, and
* understand the various means for securing service records from their respective custodians, which often include agencies outside of the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

The information in this section provides employees with* the factors they must consider in order to determine the current location of a Veteran’s service records, and
* an explanation of the proper means for requesting service records.

***Reference***: For listings of service record custodians, their contact information, and the address codes for requesting records from them through the Personnel Information Exchange System (PIES), see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.D and E. |

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| b. Determining Whether a Veteran Has an Additional Service Obligation | Knowing whether a Veteran left active duty with an obligation for further service in the Reserve components (which includes the National Guard) is critical in locating his/her service records.The table below explains how RO employees may use the Veterans Information Solution (VIS) and a Veteran’s *DD* *Form* 214*, Certificate of Release or Discharge From Active Duty*, to determine whether a Veteran has an additional service obligation and, if so, the type of service he/she is currently performing. |

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| If … | Then the Veteran … |
| the type of separation shown on the Veteran’s *DD* *Form 214* is *Release From Active Duty* | left active duty with an obligation for further service in the Reserve components. |
| the type of separation shown on the Veteran’s *DD Form 214* is *Discharge* | left active duty with ***no*** further service obligation. |
| the code in the RESERVE COMPONENT CATEGORY (RCC) field in VIS (under the heading *National Guard and Reserve Service Period*) is *SA* | is currently an active member of the Reserve or National Guard. |
| the code in the RCC field in VIS is *RE* | is currently in the Inactive Ready Reserve (IRR) or Inactive National Guard (ING). |

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| ***Notes***: If a Veteran had an obligation for further service in the Reserve components, his/her *DD Form 214* will show the termination date of the service obligation. If the termination date has passed, secure the Veteran’s service records according to the instructions for locating and obtaining the service records of Veterans with ***no*** service obligation in the Reserve components.***References***: For more information on* *DD Form 214*, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.A.8, and
* using VIS, see the [*VIS User Guide*](http://vaww.vistau.med.va.gov/Documents/VIS/VIS_UG_2014_FC_1214.pdf).
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| c. Service Records Destroyed in a Fire at the NPRC | The service records of a limited number of Veterans are no longer available because they were destroyed in a fire at the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) in 1973. Use the information in M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.E.1.a to determine whether a Veteran’s service records were among those destroyed by the fire.  |

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| d. Requesting Service Records From Alternate Sources | Sometimes, service records are not available at the locations from which ROs normally obtain them. This is often due to delays in transferring service records from one site to another. Under these circumstances, ROs should attempt to obtain the records from alternate sources. ***Example***: Service records might* never have left the separation center or treating facility
* be in the Veteran's possession, or
* still be at a Reserve/National Guard unit, even though the Veteran’s service obligation has ended.

***References***: For listings of service record custodians, their contact information, and the address codes for requesting records from them through PIES, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.D and E. |

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| e. Updating the Contact Information of Service Record Custodians | When ROs discover that contact information in M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.K.1 is no longer accurate, they should notify the PIES Help Desk by sending an e-mail to VAVBAWAS/CO/PIES. |

#### 2. Migration of STRs

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| Introduction | This topic contains information on the migration of STRs after service members separate from service, including* service department responsibilities with regard to STRs
* history behind the STR certification process
* determining whether additional development to obtain STRs is necessary
* processing STRs that do not include a certificate of completeness
* migration of STRs after service ends, and
* locating STRs of service members in the Marine Corps that are in an involuntary appellate leave status.
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| Change Date | January 27, 2016 |

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| a. Service Department Responsibilities With Regard to STRs | When a service member separates from service, his/her service department is responsible for* separating the service member’s service treatment records (STRs) from the rest of his/her service records
* ensuring the STRs are available for review during out-processing
* preparing certification that the STRs are complete, and
* routing the STRs for storage, as explained in M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.B.2.e
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| b. History Behind the STR Certification Process | On January 1, 2013, individual service departments began issuing their own version of a letter that certified the completeness of a service member’s STRs. Prior to this date, no requirement for certification existed. On June 25, 2013, DoD replaced the letters with *DD Form 2963, Service Treatment Record (STR) Certification*. By August 1, 2013, all service departments were using the new form.***Reference***: If a service department fails to certify the completeness of a service member’s STRs *after* January 1, 2013, follow the instructions in M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.B.2.d. |

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| c. Determining Whether Additional Development to Obtain STRs Is Necessary | If a certification letter/*DD Form 2963* accompanies STRs that an RO obtains from a service department, the RO should *not* undertake additional development to obtain STRs ***unless**** the claimant alleges treatment at a specific military treatment facility (MTF) during a specific period of time, and
* records referring to the treatment
* do not exist in the available STRs, and
* are not accessible through the Compensation and Pension Record Interchange (CAPRI).

If additional development is necessary, send the request to the point of contact shown on the certification letter/*DD Form 2963*. If a *follow-up request* to the point of contact becomes necessary, follow the instructions in M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.I.5.***Reference***: For more information about accessing electronic copies of STRs through CAPRI, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.B.3.k. |

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| d. Processing STRs That Do Not Include a Certificate of Completeness | The table below describes the procedures for processing STRs that do *not* include a *signed** letter of certification (if the STRs belong to a Veteran who separated from service between January 1, and July 31, 2013) or
* *DD Form 2963* (if the STRs belong to a Veteran who separated from service on or after August 1, 2013).
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| Stage | Description |
| 1 | The RO’s Military Records Specialist (MRS) reviews the claims folder for the purpose of confirming* the Veteran separated from service on or after January 1, 2013, and
* the certification letter/*DD Form 2963* is missing or unsigned.
 |
| 2 | If the MRS determines the STRs should have included a signed certification letter/*DD Form 2963* but did not, he/she must send an encrypted e-mail to request certification to the VAVBASTL/RMC/STRCERT mailbox.The e-mail must include* the Veteran’s
* name
* Social Security number (SSN)
* branch of service
* dates of service, and
* the MRS’s
* phone number
* fax number, and
* e-mail address.
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| 3 | VA’s Records Management Center (RMC) responds to the e-mail by forwarding the MRS’s request to a point of contact within the Veteran’s service department. |
| 4 | The Veteran’s service department provides a certification letter/ *DD Form 2963* to the RMC. |
| 5 | The RMC forwards the certification letter/*DD Form 2963* to the MRS.***Note***: If the RMC does not respond to the MRS’s request within 15 days, the MRS sends a follow-up e-mail to VAVBASTL/RMC/STRCERT. |
| 6 | The MRS* attaches the certification letter/*DD Form 2963* to the STRs, or
* uploads it into Virtual VA or the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) (if VA is processing the associated claim in a paperless environment).
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| ***Important***: Do not delay the processing of claims that service members submit *prior* to separation based on the absence of a certification letter/*DD Form 2963*. VA does *not* require service departments to certify the completeness of STRs VA uses to decide this category of claims. |

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| e. Migration of STRs After Service Ends | The table below shows the migration of STRs after service ends. Service, *for the purpose of this block*, ends when a service member* retires
* is released from active duty with no further service obligation
* is released from active duty with a service obligation but is
* placed in the IRR, or
* *not* immediately assigned to a Reserve unit, or
* completes his/her service obligation in the Reserve or National Guard.

***Important***:* If a service member is *immediately* assigned to a Reserve unit after being released from active duty, his/her service department sends the service member’s STRs to that unit for storage and maintenance.
* Check VIS, according to the instructions in M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.B.1.b, if there is any question regarding a service member’s Reserve status.
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| If service ended ... | Then ... |
| *prior* to the dates shown in M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.A.4.d | the STRs were forwarded to the NPRC. |
| *between* the dates shown in M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.A.4.d and* August 31, 2014 for ***Coast Guard***, or
* December 31, 2013 for ***all other branches of service***.
 | the STRs were forwarded to the RMC.***Reference***: For more information about the storage of records at the RMC, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.A.5 and 6. |
| on or after * September 1, 2014 for ***Coast Guard***, or
* January 1, 2014 for ***all other branches of service***.
 | * the STRs are digitized (scanned), and
* electronic copies of the STRs are uploaded into DoD’s Healthcare Artifacts and Images Management Solution (HAIMS).

***Notes***:* Within 45 days of the date a service member retires or separates from service, DoD expects each service department to complete
* the process described in the above paragraph, and
* the certification process described in M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.B.2.b.
* Once electronic copies of a service member’s STRs are uploaded into HAIMS, the original STRs are destroyed.
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| ***Exception***: The Public Health Service (PHS), and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) do ***not*** scan STRs and upload them into HAIMS. These records continue to be forwarded to the RMC. ***References***: For information about* HAIMS, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.B.3.f through k
* obtaining STRs for members of the Reserves or National Guard, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.B.3.c
* obtaining service records from PHS or NOAA, see
* M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.A.6, and
* M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.K.2, and
* service members who apply for VA benefits *prior* to separation, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart i, Chapter 2.
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| f. Locating STRs of Service Members in the Marine Corps Who Are in an Involuntary Appellate Leave Status | If attempts to locate the STRs of a service member in the Marine Corps who is in an involuntary appellate leave status (court-martialed and awaiting completion of the appellate review process before being discharged) have been unsuccessful, the STRs might be located at Navy and Marine Appellate Leave Activity (NAMALA)1325 10th St SE Bldg 196 Rm 303Washington, DC 20374-5147 |

#### 3. Procedures for Obtaining STRs

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| Introduction | This topic describes the procedures for obtaining STRs, including* when to ask the RMC for STRs
* following up on STRs the RMC should have sent to a vendor for scanning or to an RO
* obtaining STRs for members of the Reserves or National Guard
* locating clinical records
* interaction between VBMS and HAIMS
* suspense dates generated by VBMS for STR requests to HAIMS
* status messages generated by VBMS for STR requests to HAIMS
* how STRs from HAIMS are grouped and displayed in VBMS
* late-flowing STR documentation in HAIMS
* requesting STRs from HAIMS for survivor benefits claims
* accessing electronic copies of STRs through CAPRI
* obtaining supplemental STRs located in the Joint Legacy Viewer (JLV), and
* requesting STRs from NPRC.
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| a. When to Ask the RMC for STRs | If the RMC is in possession of a Veteran’s claims folder and/or STRs, it automatically sends the claims folder and/or STRs to a vendor for scanning and uploading into the Veteran’s electronic claims folder (eFolder) when an RO establishes a corresponding claim in VBMS. If the RO establishes the claim in Share, the RMC automatically sends the claims folder and/or STRs directly to the RO. In either case, there is rarely a need to request STRs from the RMC.Upon establishing the claim, check the FOLDER LOCATION screen in the Beneficiary Identification and Records Locator (BIRLS) to ensure that the STRs are In Transit. Use the table below to determine what action to take depending on whether or not STRs have already been sent to an RO by the RMC. |

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| **If the STRs are...** | **Then ...** |
| In Transit | no further action is required. |
| not In Transit | * the station must request the STRs by
* sending an encrypted e-mail to the RMCs mailbox at VAVBASTL/RMC/RCD
* including on the carbon copy (Cc) line the RO’s MRS corporate mailbox (to ensure prompt and accurate responses), and
* associating copies of all e-mails to RMC with the claims folder.
* In the subject line of the e-mail, enter
* *STR Request* for claims established in Share, and
* *VBMS STR* for claims established in VBMS.
* In the body of the e-mail, indicate whether the corresponding claim is being processed in VBMS or Share and include the
* Veteran’s name, VA file number, and SSN
* type of folder requested (STRs or claims folder)
* date of the first and any subsequent requests, and
* the requestor’s name and RO.
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| ***Important***: If a station erroneously receives paper STRs from the RMC for a VBMS claim, send those records to the station’s assigned vendor for scanning.***Note***: Do *not* ask the RMC for* another Veteran’s STRs within the same e-mail, or
* any non-medical records, such as personnel records.

***Reference***: For more information about the * BIRLS FOLDER LOCATION screen, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.C.6, and
* RO MRS corporate mailbox, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.I.3.d.
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| b. Following up on STRs the RMC Should Have Sent to a Vendor for Scanning or to an RO | The table below contains instructions for following up on STRs the RMC should have sent to a vendor for scanning or to an RO based on the establishment of a corresponding claim. |

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| If the RO is processing the corresponding claim in ... | Then send an encrypted e-mail to VAVBASTL/RMC/RCD with a Cc to the RO’s MRS corporate mailbox when ... |
| Share | * BIRLS shows an “in-transit” date for the STRs (at 375 or 376) that is more than two weeks in the past, and
* the STRs have not yet arrived at the RO.

***Notes***: * In the body of the e-mail,
* include the Veteran’s name and SSN
* indicate the in-transit date shown in BIRLS, and
* advise the RMC that the RO has not yet received the STRs.
* Associate copies of all e-mails to RMC with the claims folder.
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| VBMS | * two weeks have passed since the claim was established in VBMS
* the STRs have not been uploaded into the corresponding eFolder, and
* there is no indicator in VBMS that shows the STRs are awaiting scanning.

***Notes***: * In the body of the e-mail,
* include the Veteran’s name and SSN
* indicate the date the corresponding claim was established in VBMS, and
* advise the RMC that the scanning vendor has not yet received the STRs.
* Associate copies of all e-mails to RMC with the claims folder.
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| ***Note***: Send a follow-up e-mail if the RMC does not reply within 15 days. |

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| c. Obtaining STRs for Members of the Reserves or National Guard | Follow the steps in the table below to obtain STRs for members of the Reserves or National Guard. |

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| **Step** | **Action** |
| 1 | Does the Veteran currently have a service obligation as outlined in M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.B.1.b?* If *yes*, go to Step 4.
* If *no*, go to Step 2.
 |
| 2 | Request STRs from the appropriate custodian according to the migration of STRs after service ends as outlined in M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.B.2.e.  |
| 3 | Have all the required Reserve or National Guard STRs been obtained after completing the necessary development actions?* If *yes*, no further action is necessary.
* If *no*, go to Step 7.
 |
| 4 | Was the Veteran’s latest release from active duty (RAD) prior to the date in the table below?

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| --- | --- |
| Branch of Service | RAD Prior to |
| Coast Guard | September 1, 2014 |
| All others | January 1, 2014 |

* If *yes*, go to Step 6.
* If *no*, go to Step 5.
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| 5 | VBMS will automatically generate a request for STRs from HAIMS when the Veteran’s claim is established. Use the table below to determine if additional action is needed.

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| **If ...** | **Then ...** |
| the STRs have not been received from HAIMS within 45 days from the date that the request was submitted | * the MRS must send a follow-up encrypted e-mail to VAVBASTL/RMC/NG&RESERVES with a Cc line to the RO’s MRS corporate mailbox containing
* the subject *45 day follow-up on HAIMS STRs*,
* the Veteran’s full name, SSN, and branch of service
* the requestor’s name and contact information (phone and e-mail)
* create a custom tracked item with a 30-day suspense, and
* associate a copy of the e-mail with the claims folder.
 |
| * the STRs are not found in HAIMS, or
* there is no break between the Veteran’s latest period of active duty service and current Reserve or National Guard service.
 | go to Step 7. |
| the STRs have been received. | no further action is necessary. |

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| 6 | Was there a complete separation from active duty service prior to the Veteran’s Reserve or National Guard service?* If *yes*, go to Step 2 to obtain STRs from the Veteran’s active duty period.
* If *no*, go to Step 7.
 |
| 7 | Submit a PIES request to address code 7 using request code* *RV1* for a Reserve member, or
* *NG1* for a National Guard member.

Complete the information requested in the pop-up dialogue box.***Note***: Submission of a PIES request under this step is required regardless of the duration of time since separation from the Guard/Reserves if the member never served on active duty. A negative response from RMC is also still required. ***Important***: PIES must contain a period of service with a *RSV*(**R**e**s**er**v**e) or *NG*(**N**ational **G**uard) duty status. If necessary, add or modify the period(s) of service in PIES. |
| 8 | Create a custom tracked item with a 30-day suspense, and the corresponding label* *RV1 – Reserve Records Request,* or
* *NG1 – National Guard Records Request*.

***Note***: Discontinue creating custom tracked items once the use of standardized tracked items has been implemented for these PIES request codes. |

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| ***Reminder***: When a Veteran indicates private medical treatment for a condition related to Reserve or National Guard duty during, or in close proximity to, the time frame in which the duty was conducted, obtain the records as described in M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii 1.C for consideration in deciding the claim.***References***: For more information about * requesting records through PIES, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.D
* obtaining STRs from RMC, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.B.3.a and b
* obtaining STRs from HAIMS, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.B.3.e through j, and
* following up on requests for service records, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.I.
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| d. Locating Clinical Records  | Inpatient or outpatient treatment records, which include detailed, daily treatment records and nursing notes associated with a period of hospitalization, are commonly referred to as “clinical records.” Clinical records are rarely included in STRs because the treating facilities that create them retain the records for the time periods shown in the table below and then send them to NPRC.Hospital summaries take the place of clinical records in STRs. Normally, these summaries are adequate for rating purposes. When review of the actual clinical records is necessary, request them from the treating facility or NPRC (whichever has custody). |

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| If the treating facility is a/an … | Then the treating facility retains the records for … |
| Army or Air Force hospital | one year after the end of the calendar year during which the Veteran received treatment. |
| Navy hospital | two years after the end of the calendar year during which the Veteran received treatment. |
| military teaching hospital | an additional 5 to 10 years. |

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| ***Important***: If a Veteran was treated in an MTF as a *retiree* after 2004, VA employees may access electronic copies of his/her clinical records under the VISTAWEB/DOD RECORDS tab in CAPRI.***References***: For information about* requesting retired clinical records from NPRC, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.A.2.c
* requesting clinical records from NPRC, see the [*PIES Participant Guide*](http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/21/publicat/Users/Pies/PIESparticipantguide.zip), and
* accessing a retiree’s clinical records through CAPRI, see the [*CAPRI User Manual*](http://www.va.gov/vdl/application.asp?appid=133).
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| e. Interaction Between VBMS and HAIMS | VBMS automatically submits a request for a Veteran’s STRs to HAIMS when* a Veteran whose service ended on or after January 1, 2014 files a claim for VA benefits, and
* the RO that received the claim begins processing it in VBMS.
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| If ... | Then HAIMS provides VA with ... |
| HAIMS has never before responded to a request for the Veteran’s STRs | a certified, electronic copy of all STRs the Veteran’s service department has uploaded into HAIMS. |
| HAIMS has already responded to an initial request for STRs | an electronic copy of any *additional* STRs the Veteran’s service department has uploaded into HAIMS since the previous request. |

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| ***Notes***:* No tracked item is generated when VBMS submits a request to HAIMS.
* To determine the status of a request, users must rely on the status and error messages listed in M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii,2.B.3.g.
* When HAIMS transmits an electronic copy of a Veteran’s STRs to VBMS, VBMS
* inserts the copy into the Veteran’s eFolder, and
* displays a “new mail” indicator to alert users that the Veteran’s STRs are available for viewing.
* When the Veteran’s separation date is on or after January 1, 2014, but the separation date either does not exist or is updated in the corporate record during claim establishment or processing, VBMS displays a button labeled “Request STR Again” under the OBTAIN STRS tab. Users must return to this tab and click on the button after updating the corporate record with the correct separation date.
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| f. Suspense Dates Generated by VBMS for STR Requests to HAIMS | When a request for copies of STRs is submitted to HAIMS through VBMS, VBMS generates a suspense date for the request as described in the table below. The request remains active until the claim is closed, cleared, or cancelled. |

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| If the date of claim is ... | Then VBMS generates a suspense date that is ... |
| within the 45-day period that immediately precedes the claimant’s separation date | 46 days following the date of separation. |
| at least 45 days ***after*** the date the claimant separated from service | two days after the date the corresponding claim was created in VBMS. |

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| ***Important***: If the suspense date passes before a status message is received, send e-mail notification to VAVBAWAS/CO/PIES. |

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| **g. Status Messages Generated by VBMS for STR Requests to HAIMS** | When a request for copies of STRs is submitted to HAIMS through VBMS, the status of the request is located in the OBTAIN STRS section of the DEVELOPMENT PLAN for the claim in VBMS.Use the table below to determine the meaning of the status messages and any associated actions required. |

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| VBMS Status Message | Meaning of Status Message |
| *SUCCESS:* *Veteran is now eligible for an electronic STR. This request has been queued for processing and will be submitted soon.* | The RAD date in VBMS is * in the future, or
* the same as the date the claim is being established.

The system will generate the STR request but will withhold sending the request to HAIMS until 24 hours past the RAD date in VBMS. ***Note***: Once successfully submitted to HAIMS, the status message will be updated. |
| *SUCCESS: Electronic STR Requested. Request Date [mm/dd/yyyy]. Request Successful. Suspense Date [mm/dd/yyyy].*  | VBMS sent the request for STRs to HAIMS and displays the date submitted, the status, and VBMS automatically generated suspense date.  |
| *SUCCESS: Electronic STR received. Date received [mm/dd/yyyy]. Document uploaded to Veteran’s eFolder. Please note - additional STR documents may still be in the process of uploading to the eFolder.* | HAIMS uploaded all STR documentation into the VBMS eFolder.***Important***: The STR is complete if the certification memo is in the VBMS eFolder. If the certification memo is not in the VBMS eFolder, additional STRs may still be in process of uploading. |
| *INFORMATION: STR Requested. Request Date [mm/dd/yyyy]. Veteran Already Successfully Subscribed.* | There is an active request for STR documentation and any new STR documentation added to HAIMS will automatically be sent to the VBMS eFolder. No action necessary. |
| *WARNING: Electronic STR Requested. Request date [mm/dd/yyyy]. Request Successful. Suspense Date [mm/dd/yyyy] has Expired.* | VBMS successfully sent the request to HAIMS but VBMS did not receive any STRs and the suspense date expired. The request will remain pending in VBMS.Use the table below to determine if additional action is necessary.

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| **If the service member or Veteran** **...** | **Then ...** |
| is still on active duty (including service under Title 10 or 32 U.S.C.) | no action is needed.The STRs will be uploaded into HAIMS following separation/retirement from military service. |
| is currently serving in the Reserves or National Guard | refer to M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.B.3.c for information about requesting the records through PIES. |
| has been separated or retired from the Reserves or National Guard for at least 45 days | * the MRS must send a follow-up encrypted e-mail to VAVBASTL/RMC/NG&RESERVES with a Cc line to the RO’s MRS corporate mailbox containing
* the subject *45 day follow-up on HAIMS STRs*,
* the Veteran’s full name, SSN, and branch of service
* the requestor’s name and contact information (phone and e-mail)
* create a custom tracked item with a 30-day suspense, and
* associate copy of e-mail with the claims folder.

***Note***: If the required STRs are not available in HAIMS, refer to M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.B.3.c for information about requesting the records through PIES. |
| * is no longer serving, and
* did not serve in the Reserves or National Guard
 | * for ***Coast Guard***, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.B.8.a and c, or
* for ***all other branches***,contact Central Office (CO) for assistance at VAVBAWAS/CO/PIES.
 |

  |
| *WARNING: This Veteran is not eligible for an Electronic STR Request. Eligibility checked on [mm/dd/yyyy] at [hh:mm]. The EP code [xxx] does not meet the eligibility criteria.* | The rating end product (EP) code that was established is outside of the rating EP bundle.Follow the steps in the table below to resubmit the STR request.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Step** | **Action** |
| 1 | Update the EP code to a rating EP.  |
| 2 | Return to the OBTAIN STR tab in the DEVELOPMENT PLAN section of VBMS. |
| 3 | Resubmit the STR request by clicking *Request STR Again*.The status message will be updated immediately to reflect a new status. |

***Note***: This also applies to pre-discharge claims. |
| *WARNING: This Veteran is not eligible for an Electronic STR Request. Eligibility checked on [mm/dd/yyyy] at [hh:mm]. The RAD Date does not meet the eligibility criteria.* | The Veteran’s military profile must be updated to reflect correct RAD date.If the correct RAD date is on or after January 1, 2014, then follow the steps in the table below to resubmit the STR request.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Step** | **Action** |
| 1 | Update the Veteran’s military service.  |
| 2 | Return to the OBTAIN STR tab in the DEVELOPMENT PLAN section of VBMS. |
| 3 | Resubmit the STR request by clicking *Request STR Again*.The status message will be updated immediately to reflect a new status. |

***Note***: This also applies to pre-discharge claims.***Reference***: For information on locating STRs for Veteran’s with a RAD date prior to January 1, 2014, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.B.2.e. |
| *ERROR: Electronic STR Requested. Request Date [mm/dd/yyyy]. Request Unsuccessful. [No Veteran]* or *[Multiple Veterans] Found.* | HAIMS could not identify the Veteran.Follow the steps in the table below to resubmit the STR request.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Step** | **Action** |
| 1 | Verify and update all personally identifiable information (PII) and military service.  |
| 2 | Return to the OBTAIN STR tab in the DEVELOPMENT PLAN section of VBMS. |
| 3 | Resubmit the STR request by clicking *Request STR Again*.The status message will be updated immediately to reflect a new status. |

***Note***: If the status message does not change, contact CO for assistance at VAVBAWAS/CO/PIES. |
| *ERROR: Unsuccessful. Internal Server Error. Electronic STR requested. Request date [mm/dd/yyyy]. Request incomplete. Note – During this request an external system error was encountered preventing it from completing. An automated retry will be attempted on [mm/dd/yyyy] at [hh:mm AM/PM].*  | VBMS encountered an error and will make four attempts to request the STRs. This message displays when the ***initial*** attempt has been made.The status message will update automatically with each attempt. If all attempts fail, contact CO for assistance at VAVBAWAS/CO/PIES.  |
| *ERROR: Unsuccessful. Internal Server Error. Electronic STR requested. Request date [mm/dd/yyyy]. Request incomplete. Note – During this request an external system error was encountered preventing it from completing. Retry attempt [X] of 4. Next retry attempt [mm/dd/yyyy] at [hh:mm AM/PM].* | VBMS encountered an error and will make four attempts to request the STRs. This message displays while ***subsequent*** attempts are being made.The status message will update automatically with each attempt. If all attempts fail, contact CO for assistance at VAVBAWAS/CO/PIES. |
| *ERROR: Unsuccessful. Internal Server Error. Electronic STR requested. Request date [mm/dd/yyyy]. This request reached the maximum number of retry attempts.*  | VBMS encountered an error and has made four attempts to request the STRs. This message displays when all four attempts have ***failed***.Contact CO for assistance at VAVBAWAS/CO/PIES. |

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| h. How STRs From HAIMS Are Grouped and Displayed in VBMS | Electronic copies of STRs that HAIMS transmits to VBMS are grouped and displayed in a Veteran’s eFolder with the following titles* *STR Medical Record* (Parts 1 through 4)
* *STR Dental Record* (Parts 1 and 2)
* *STR Dental Records* (Parts 3 and 4 - Navy only)
* *STR Administrative Documentation* (Records in this group include the *DD Form 2963* referenced in M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.B.2.b.)
* *AHLTA* (records MTFs transfer into HAIMS from the Armed Forces Healthcare Longitudinal Technology Application)
* *Loose-Flowing STR Documentation* (individual records that were scanned and uploaded into HAIMS ***before*** preparation of *DD Form 2963*), and
* *Late-Flowing STR Documentation* (individual records that were scanned and uploaded into HAIMS ***after*** preparation of *DD Form 2963*).

***Notes***:* To avoid difficulties in identifying STRs in an eFolder, do ***not*** change their assigned titles.
* If VBMS users experience difficulty accessing or viewing electronic copies of STRs that HAIMS provides, they should send e-mail notification to VAVBAWAS/CO/PIES.

***Reference***: For more information about late-flowing STR documentation, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.B.3.i. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| i. Late-Flowing STR Documentation in HAIMS | When an MTF scans and uploads late-flowing STRs into HAIMS, the MTF is responsible for notifying the Veteran to whom the STRs belong. The Veteran is then responsible for notifying VA if he/she wants VA to reconsider a previous decision or reopen a previously denied claim based on the additional STRs.If the Veteran does notify VA, VBMS automatically submits a request for the additional STRs to HAIMS when the station of origination (SOO) establishes a corresponding claim in VBMS. If the Veteran already has a claim pending in VBMS, the STR documents will flow from HAIMS to VBMS automatically.***References***: For more information about * processing unassociated or supplemental STRs received from the RMC or other sources, see M21-1, Part IV, Subpart ii, 2.A.2, and
* using VBMS, see the [*VBMS User Guide*](http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/VBMS/Resources_Technical_Information.asp).
 |

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| **j. Requesting STRs from HAIMS for Survivor Benefits Claims** | VBMS limitations do not currently allow the establishment of claims in which the claimant is *not* the Veteran, including survivor benefits claims. Therefore, the development activity is not able to request STRs from HAIMS when STRs are required to decide a survivor benefits claim if * the deceased service member or Veteran
* discharged from military service on or after January 1, 2014
* passed away on or after January 1, 2014, and
* the date of claim is January 1, 2014 or later.

The table below describes the process for obtaining STRs for survivor benefits claims in these circumstances. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Stage** | **Description** |
| 1 | The Pension Management Center (PMC) requests the STRs from the VA Liaison Office (VALO) by sending an encrypted e-mail to VAVBASTL/RMC/NG&RESERVES containing* the subject *PMC 140/029* to distinguish from Reserve and National Guard requests
* the service member’s or Veteran’s
* full name (first, middle, last)
* SSN, and
* branch of service, and
* the requestor’s name and contact information (phone and e-mail) for questions.
 |
| 2 | The VALO requests the STRs through the DoD points of contact. |
| 3 | Upon receipt of the STRs, the VALO will* upload the STRs into VBMS, and
* respond to the PMC e-mail.
 |
| 4 | If the VALO has not responded within 30 days, then the PMC sends a follow-up e-mail to request a status update. |

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| --- |
| ***References***: For more information on* migration of STRs after service ends, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.B.2.e, and
* developing claims for dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) and death compensation, see M21-1 Part IV, Subpart iii, 1.
 |

|  |  |
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| k. Accessing Electronic Copies of STRs Through CAPRI | Electronic copies of *some* STRs are accessible under the VISTAWEB/DOD RECORDS tab in CAPRI. VA employees must check CAPRI for the availability of these records anytime * they are unable to obtain a complete set of a Veteran’s STRs through the other means described in this section, or
* the available STRs do not show the event, injury, or disease.

***Note***: Because DoD certifies as complete the collection of STRs it stores electronically in HAIMS, any electronic copies of STRs that VA can access through CAPRI should already exist in HAIMS. ***Reference***: For more information about accessing electronic records in CAPRI, see the [*CAPRI User Manual*](http://www.va.gov/vdl/application.asp?appid=133).  |

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| **l. Obtaining Supplemental STRs Located in the JLV** | The Joint Legacy Viewer (JLV) is a web-based viewer that delivers real time access of Department of Defense (DoD) and VA electronic health information to a limited number of RO personnel. The records located in the JLV are intended only to supplement the STRs certified by DoD as complete.Follow the steps in the table below when JLV records are obtained that are *not* found in the certified STRs. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Step** | **Action** |
| 1 | Compare the date of entry of the JLV record with the DoD STR certification of completeness. Is the JLV record entry date *after* the date of STR certification?* If *yes*, then the certified STRs would not contain the JLV record. No further action necessary.
* If *no*, go to Step 2.

***Important***: Review the Veteran’s record to ensure all completed periods of service are being considered. |
| 2 | Forward the record to the local MRS for a thorough secondary review. Does the MRS concur that the document is dated prior to the STR certification and does not exist in the certified complete STRs?* If *yes*, go to Step 3.
* If *no*, no further action is necessary.
 |
| 3 | The MRS will e-mail a summary of the discrepancy to VACO at VAVBAWAS/CO/PIES.VACO will track errors and notify DoD to prevent further conflicting occurrences. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| m. Requesting STRs From NPRC | NPRC houses STRs of Veterans whose service ended prior to the dates shown in M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.A.4.d.M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.A.4.h contains instructions for requesting STRs from the NPRC. |

#### 4. Locating and Obtaining Army Official Military Personnel Files (OMPFs)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Introduction | This topic contains instructions for locating and obtaining Army official military personnel files (OMPFs), including * maintenance and storage of OMPFs, and
* location of OMPFs and the means for requesting copies.
 |

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| Change Date | July 23, 2015 |

|  |  |
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| a. Maintenance and Storage of OMPFs | The Army maintains an official military personnel file (OMPF) for each enlisted service member. These OMPFs are currently stored in an electronic format in the Army’s Interactive Permanent Electronic Records Management System (iPERMS).The OMPFs of enlisted service members remain in iPERMS after their period of active duty ends. An electronic copy of the OMPF is transferred to the Army Human Resource Command (HRC) in Ft. Knox for archiving if a service member* retires from active duty
* is released from active duty with *no* further service obligation, or
* is released from active duty with a service obligation but is not actively serving in a specific Reserve or National Guard unit.

***Notes***: * The military field activity is responsible for ensuring that all personnel records are added to the OMPF in iPERMS during the separation/retirement process.
* With the exception of enlistment examination and Physical Evaluation Board reports, the OMPF rarely contains any STRs.
* Prior to August 2005, the Army referred to the OMPF of an enlisted service member as his/her “military personnel records jacket” (MPRJ).
* The Army began digitizing the OMPF into iPERMS on October 1, 1994 and continued to transfer the original, paper versions of OMPFs to NPRC for storage until October 1, 2002.
 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| b. Location of OMPFs and the Means for Requesting Copies | Use the information in the table below to determine* the location of Army OMPFs, and
* the means for requesting copies of these records.
 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| If … | Then … |
| service ended prior to October 1, 1994 | * OMPFs are located at NPRC, and
* ROs may request copies of them through PIES.
 |
| service ended between October 1, 1994 and September 30, 2002 | * OMPFs should be stored electronically as image files in iPERMS, and
* ROs may request copies of them through the [Defense Personnel Records Image Retrieval System (DPRIS)](https://www.dpris.dod.mil/).

***Important***: If DPRIS returns a response indicating there is no information for the Veteran, then ROs may request copies of the OMPF through PIES. |
| * service ended on or after October 1, 2002, or
* the claimant is a member of the Reserve or National Guard
 | * OMPFs are stored electronically as image files in iPERMS, and
* ROs may request copies of them through [DPRIS](https://www.dpris.dod.mil/).
 |

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| --- |
| ***References***: For more information about using* PIES, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.D, and
* DPRIS, see the [*DPRIS User Guide*](https://www.dpris.dod.mil/downloads/dpris_user_guide.pdf).
 |

#### 5. Locating and Obtaining Navy Personnel Records

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Introduction | This topic contains information about locating and obtaining Navy personnel records, including* location of Navy personnel records and the means for requesting copies, and
* location of Navy records associated with line-of-duty determinations.
 |

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| --- | --- |
| Change Date | August 21, 2014 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| a. Location of Navy Personnel Records and the Means for Requesting Copies | Use the information in the table below to determine* the location of Navy personnel records, and
* the means for requesting copies of these records.
 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| If … | Then … |
| service ended prior to January 1, 1995 | * personnel records are located at NPRC, and
* ROs may request copies of them through PIES.
 |
| * service ended on or after January 1, 1995, or
* the claimant is a member of the Reserve
 | * personnel records are stored electronically as image files in the Navy’s Electronic Military Personnel Records System (EMPRS), and
* ROs may request copies of them through [DPRIS](https://www.dpris.dod.mil/).
 |

|  |
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| ***References***: For more information about using* PIES, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.D, and
* DPRIS, see the [*DPRIS User Guide*](https://www.dpris.dod.mil/downloads/dpris_user_guide.pdf).
 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| b. Location of Navy Records Associated with Line-of-Duty Determinations | Use the table below to determine the location of records associated with line-of-duty (LOD) determinations. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| If the date of the determination was … | Then the associated records are located … |
| on or before December 31, 1995 | at the following addressOffice of the Judge Advocate General1322 Patterson Ave., Suite 3000Washington Navy YardWashington, DC 23074-5066 |
| between 1996 and 2003 | at the office address of the commanding officer over the location/facility where the incident occurred. |
| after 2003 | in the corresponding STRs.***Note***: The exact date in 2004 when the Navy began including records associated with LOD determinations in STRs is unknown. |

#### 6. Locating and Obtaining Air Force Personnel Records

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Change Date | July 23, 2015 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| a. Location of Air Force Personnel Records and the Means for Requesting Copies | Use the information in the table below to determine * the location of Air Force personnel records, and
* the means for requesting copies of these records.
 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| If … | Then … |
| service ended prior to October 1, 2004 | * personnel records are located at the NPRC, and
* ROs may request copies of them through PIES.

***Exception***: If a member of the Air National Guard completed his/her period of service prior to October 1, 2004, his/her personnel records are located in the State Adjutant General’s Office of the state in which the member served.***Reference***: For information about contacting a State Adjutant General’s Office, see the [Adjutants General directory](http://www.ngaus.org/united-voice-national-guard/adjutants-general) on the National Guard Association of the United States web site.  |
| * service ended on or after October 1, 2004, or
* the claimant is a member of the Reserve or National Guard
 | * personnel records are stored electronically as image files in the Air Force’s Automated Records Management System (ARMS), and
* ROs may request copies of them through [DPRIS](https://www.dpris.dod.mil/).
 |

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| ***References***: For more information about using* PIES, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.D, and
* DPRIS, see the [*DPRIS User Guide*](https://www.dpris.dod.mil/downloads/dpris_user_guide.pdf).
 |

#### 7. Locating and Obtaining Marine Corps Personnel Records

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Change Date | August 21, 2014 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| a. Location of Marine Corps Personnel Records and the Means for Requesting Copies | Use the information in the table below to determine* the location of Marine Corps personnel records, and
* the means for requesting copies of these records.
 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| If … | Then … |
| service ended prior to January 1, 1999 | * personnel records are located at NPRC, and
* ROs may request copies of them through PIES.
 |
| * service ended on or after January 1, 1999, or
* the claimant is a member of the Reserve
 | * personnel records are stored electronically as image files in the Marine Corps’ Optical Digital Imaging – Records Management System (ODI-RMS), and
* ROs may request copies of them through [DPRIS](https://www.dpris.dod.mil/).
 |

|  |
| --- |
| ***References***: For more information about using* PIES, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.D, and
* DPRIS, see the [*DPRIS User Guide*](https://www.dpris.dod.mil/downloads/dpris_user_guide.pdf).
 |

#### 8. Locating and Obtaining Coast Guard Service Records

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Introduction | This topic contains information about locating and obtaining Coast Guard service records, including* migration of Coast Guard service records when no further service obligation exists
* migration of Coast Guard service records when a Reserve obligation exists
* migration of service records after a Coast Guard Reservist retires or completes his/her service obligation, and
* locating service records not found at NPRC or RMC, and
* requesting Coast Guard investigative reports.
 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Change Date | January 27, 2016 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| a. Migration of Coast Guard Service Records When No Further Service Obligation Exists  | When an individual is discharged from the Coast Guard with no further service obligation, his/her ***personnel*** ***records*** are sent to NPRC. Use the table below to determine the location of the individual’s ***STRs***. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| If the individual was discharged ... | Then the STRs were forwarded to ... |
| *prior to* May 1, 1998 | NPRC |
| between May 1, 1998 and August 31, 2014 | RMC |
| on or after September 1, 2014 | HAIMS |

|  |
| --- |
| ***Reference***: For more information about the storage of records at * RMC, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.A.5 and 6, and
* NPRC, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.A.4.
 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| b. Migration of Coast Guard Service Records When a Reserve Obligation Exists | The table below outlines the migration of Coast Guard service records after a service member separates from service with a Reserve obligation. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| If the service member ... | Then ... |
| * is ***not*** assigned to an active Reserve unit, or
* is placed in the IRR
 | his/her STRs and personnel records are maintained by the Coast Guard Personnel Service Center (PSC), Reserve Personnel Management Division (PSC-RPM) (PIES address code 51), until* the service member resumes drilling, or
* the Reserve obligation ends.

***Important***: If these records are not obtained after an initial PIES request to address code 51 has been completed, a request for these records can be made to the Coast Guard PSC-RPM by fax at (703) 872-6497.  |
| is assigned to an active Reserve unit | the Reserve unit usually maintains both the STRs and personnel records. However, in some districts, these records are maintained at* maintenance logistic centers (MLCs), or
* integrated support commands (ISCs).

***Note***: Units will forward requests for service records to the appropriate MLC or ISC if the records are located at one of these sites. |

|  |
| --- |
| ***References***: For more information about* requesting records through PIES, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.D
* obtaining STRs for members of the Reserves or National Guard, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.B.3.c, and
* the migration of service records after the expiration of the Reserve obligation, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.B.8.a.
 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| c. Migration of Service Records After a Coast Guard Reservist Retires or Completes His/Her Service Obligation  | When a Reservist’s service obligation ends or he/she retires from the Reserve, the Reservist’s service records are first sent to the Coast Guard PSC. The table below contains information about the processing of service records after they arrive at the Coast Guard PSC. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| If the Reservist ... | Then the Coast Guard PSC ... |
| * did ***not*** retire from the Reserve, or
* retired from the Reserve ***and*** is at least 60 years old
 | * uploads the STRs to HAIMS, and
* forwards the personnel records to NPRC.
 |
| * retired from the Reserve, and
* is ***under*** age 60
 | retains the Reservist’s service records until he/she turns 60. At that time, the STRs will be uploaded to HAIMS, and the personnel records forwarded to NPRC. |

|  |
| --- |
| ***Note***: It may take up to six months following the date the Reserve obligation ends, the service member retires from the Reserve, or he/she turns 60 before NPRC receives personnel records from the Coast Guard PSC, Business Operations Staff, Military Records Branch (PSC-BOPS-MR).If these records are not obtained after an initial PIES request to address code 51 has been completed, a request for these records can be made to the Coast Guard PSC-BOPS-MR by fax at (703) 872-6665. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| d. Locating Service Records Not Found at NPRC or RMC | Use the table below to locate OMPFs or STRs for a particular Veteran if the records are not found at NPRC, RMC, or uploaded to HAIMS. below  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| If locating ... | Then contact ... |
| OMPFs | Coast Guard Military Records Customer Service at the following* General Inquiries: E-mail MR\_CustomerService@uscg.mil.
* Specific requests with claim number: E-mail Mary.G.Yates@uscg.mil.
* If unable to send an encrypted e-mail, fax your request to (202) 372-8440, and
* send an e-mail to Ms. Yates letting her know to expect your transmission.

***Important***: Include the Veteran’s name, contact information, rank, dates of service, last duty station (if available) and a mailing address, in case the Coast Guard needs to send hard copy documents. |
| STRs | Coast Guard Central Cell by submitting a PIES O99 request to address code 7, under the Coast Guard tab. Use the table below to determine what text to include.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **If the STRs should be held by …** | **Then include the following text in the PIES O99 request …** |
| RMC | *The VA RMC provided a negative response for the STR. Please contact the CG Central Cell to locate the STR and upload the STR into HAIMS*. |
| HAIMS | *The STR has not been received from HAIMS within 45 days. Please contact the CG Central Cell to locate the STR and upload the STR into HAIMS.* |

 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| e. Requesting Coast Guard Investigative Reports | To obtain investigative reports from the Coast Guard Investigative Service, direct the request toLangston BrooksFOIA/Privacy Act OfficerCase Management SpecialistCoast Guard Investigative Services4200 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 740Arlington, VA 22203Phone: (703) 872-6675Fax: (703) 872-6603 |