#### Department of Veterans Affairs M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii

**Veterans Benefits Administration May 12, 2015**

**Washington, DC 20420**

#### Transmittal Sheet

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| Changes Included in This Revision | The table below describes the changes included in this revision of Veterans Benefits Manual M21-1, Part III, “General Claims Process,” Subpart iii, “General Development and Dependency Issues.”***Notes***: * The term regional office (RO) also includes pension management center (PMC), where appropriate.
* Unless otherwise noted, the term “claims folder” refers to the official, numbered, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) repository – whether paper or electronic – for all documentation relating to claims that a Veteran and/or his/her survivors file with VA.
* Minor editorial changes have also been made to
* remove references to rescinded portions of *old* M21-1
* remove references to specific claims-processing systems, where doing so does not affect the clarity of the instructions or information provided
* update incorrect or obsolete hyperlink references
* update obsolete terminology, where appropriate
* renumber each topic based on the standard that the first topic in each section is Topic 1
* reassign alphabetical designations to individual blocks and repaginate, where necessary, to account for new and/or deleted blocks within a topic
* update section and topic titles to more accurately reflect their content
* clarify block labels and/or block text, and
* bring the documents into conformance with M21-1 standards.
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| Reason(s) for the Change | Citation |
| * To reorganize information between three blocks so that it flows more logically.
* To remove duplicate information from within the three blocks.
 | M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, Chapter 5, Section K, Topic 1, Blocks a, b and c (III.iii.5.K.1.a, b and c) |
| To add a block containing instructions for handling cases in which the Hines Information Technology Center (ITC) is unable to issue *VA Form 21-0538*, *Status of Dependents Questionnaire*, or *VA Form 21-0537*, *Marital Status Questionnaire*, to a beneficiary. |  III.iii.5.K.1.d |
| * To explain how to leave annotations on questionnaires now that questionnaires are processed in a paperless environment.
* To add information about the processing of *VA Form 21-0538* by VA contractors.
 | III.iii.5.K.2.a |
| To explain how to leave annotations on questionnaires now that questionnaires are processed in a paperless environment. | III.iii.5.K.2.c |
| To add instruction to establish end product (EP) 130 upon receipt of an unsigned or incomplete questionnaire. | III.iii.5.K.2.e |
| To explain how to “annotate the award print” when an award is processed in the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS). | III.iii.5.K.3.b, c and d |
| To remove redundant instructions to file *VA Forms 21-0538* in the Veteran’s claims folder*.* | III.iii.5.K.3.b |
| To revise instructions regarding the handling of questionnaires that do not show the date of change in status to include instrutions to* return the questionnaire to the beneficiary, and
* establish EP 130 to control for its return.
 | III.iii.5.K.3.d |
| * To add instruction to use EP 693 when handling a case in which a beneficiary fails to return a questionnaire (as control for any action that might result in the creation of an overpayment).
* To add instruction to check the mail portal for receipt of the questionnaire if one is not of record in the claims folder
* To note that ROs may use a completed and signed *VA Form 21-686c, Declaration of Status of Dependents*, that is less than one year old, as certification of the status of a Veteran’s dependents.
* To explain how to “annotate the award print” when an award is processed in VBMS.
* To add instructions to document attempts to contact a beneficiary by telephone as a permanent note in the claims-processing system.
* To add information about the processing of *VA Form 21-0538* by VA contractors.
 | III.iii.5.K.4.a |
| To update instructions for establishing a system diary. | III.iii.5.K.5.a |
| To remove incorrect instruction to establish EP 130. | III.iii.5.K.5.b |
| * To update instructions so they apply to the handling of questionnaires in a paperless environment.
* To state that an RO should *not* transfer a questionnaire to the RO with jurisdiction over the corresponding claims folder *unless* the RO that received the questionnaire is unable to process the questionnaire without the claims folder.
 | III.iii.5.K.7.a |
| To delete (old) III.iii.5.K.8, as it contains instructions and information that is presented elsewhere in this section. | --- |

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| Rescissions | None |

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| Authority | By Direction of the Under Secretary for Benefits |

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| Signature | Thomas J. Murphy, DirectorCompensation Service |

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