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

**Veterans Benefits Administration July 30, 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 iv, “General Rating Process.”***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
* reorder and restructure the entire section into a more logical order
* update incorrect or obsolete 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, 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 document into conformance with M21-1 standards.
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| Reason(s) for the Change | Citation |
| To clarify the policy on using an appropriate examination facility. | M21-1 Part III, Subpart iv, Section 3, Topic 1, Block b (III.iv.3.A.1.b) |
| * To update guidance on foreign claims jurisdiction.
* To consolidate guidance from old Block o on field investigations and examinations.
 | III.iv.3.A.1.c |
| To add information about using the Exam Request Routing Assistant (ERRA) tool. | III.iv.3.A.1.d |
| To separate definitions of general medical, specialty, and specialist exams into their own individual blocks. | III.iv.3.A.1.f-h |
| To delete blocks from Topic 1 and relocate information about Disability Benefit Questionnaires (DBQs) to new Topic 3 and to III.iv.3.D. | -- |
| To delete outdated guidance on sending copies of insufficient DBQs to Central Office. | -- |
| To relocate guidance on sending the claims folder with an examination request to new Topic 15. | -- |
| To relocate all blocks about Acceptable Clinical Evidence (ACE) examinations to new Topic 4. |  |
| To add a new topic providing guidance on exam request tools.  | III.iv.3.A.2 |
| To add new topic providing guidance on DBQs. | III.iv.3.A.3 |
| To add new guidance on DBQs and exam cancellations from Compensation Service Bulletin of May 2012. | III.iv.3.A.3.c |
| To add new topic providing guidance on ACE Examinations.  | III.iv.3.A.4 |
| To add a reference for requesting exams in support of claims for individual unemployability (IU) benefits. | III.iv.3.A.5.a |
| To add a reference for general medical examination DBQs. | III.iv.3.A.5.c |
| To add guidance on DBQs that require a specialist. | III.iv.3.A.6.d |
| To incorporate the use of the Exam Request Builder (ERB) tool into the guidance on requesting a medical opinion. | III.iv.3.A.7.b |
| To delete guidance on requesting a medical opinion for conflicting medical evidence as the same procedure now applies for all medical opinion requests. | -- |
| To update guidance on properly identifying evidence in a medical opinion request by using the ERB tool. | III.iv.3.A.7.c |
| To clarify that RO employees should identify all evidence, both favorable and unfavorable, when requesting an exam. | III.iv.3.A.7.d |
| To relocate guidance on examiner’s statements that an opinion would be speculative from old Block g to III.iv.3.D.2. | -- |
| To update instructions to include using the ERB tool for requesting an opinion in a 38 U.S.C. 1151 claim. | III.iv.3.A.7.f |
| To clarify the policies on independent medical opinions. | III.iv.3.A.7.i |
| To update the procedures for requesting an aid and attendance and Housebound examination. | III.iv.3.A.8.c |
| To add a reference for processing Chapter 18 claims. | III.iv.3.A.9.a |
| * To clarify the exam policy for IU claims received from incarcerated Veterans based on Fast Letter 11-02.
* To add references.
 | III.iv.3.A.9.d |
| To add guidance on homeless Veteran examination requests. | III.iv.3.A.9.g |
| To clarify who may conduct a social survey. | III.iv.3.A.10.d |
| To add references for developing former prisoner of war (FPOW) claims. | III.iv.3.A.11.a |
| * To clarify that monetary benefits to an FPOW should not be denied unless the claimant was offered a complete examination.
* To add a reference to the relevant regulation.
 | III.iv.3.A.11.b |
| To note that the FPOW DBQ is restricted to internal VA use and cannot be completed by a contract examiner. | III.iv.3.A.11.c |
| To update information on FPOW examination requests. | III.iv.3.A.11.d |
| To delete guidance on when to order reexaminations in FPOW cases as RO employees should follow the guidance on adequacy of examinations (III.iv.3.D) and duty to assist with an examination (I.1.C.3).  | -- |
| To delete old Topic 13 which contained guidance on the use of *VA Form 21-2507, Request for Physical Examination*. This form is no longer in use. | -- |
| To update guidance on who is eligible for pre-discharge examinations. | III.iv.3.A.13.a |
| To add information about Separation Health Assessment (SHA). | III.iv.3.A.13.b |
| To add a new Block containing guidance on the SHA and general medical examinations. | III.iv.3.A.13.c |
| To expand the guidance that was previously for BDD claims and pregnant servicewomen so that it is now relevant to examinations of pregnant claimants. | III.iv.3.A.14 |
| To delete outdated guidance on BDD claims and pregnant servicewomen. | -- |
| To add new topic providing guidance on examiner review of the claims folder. | III.iv.3.A.15 |
| To add new Block consolidating and updating the procedures for requesting an exam. | III.iv.3.A.16.a |
| To delete and relocate to new Topic 2 Blocks a and b on the ERB and CAPRI. | -- |
| * To update guidance on entering an exam request in Compensation and Pension Record Interchange (CAPRI).
* To add discussion of entering the claim type and special considerations.
 | III.iv.3.A.16.b |
| To delete outdated information on adding priority of an exam request as this field is no longer available in CAPRI. | -- |
| To relocate guidance on the folder copy of the examination request to Topic 16, Block a. | -- |
| To relocate guidance on requesting examination of claimants residing in the jurisdiction of another regional office to Topic 1. | -- |

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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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