#### Department of Veterans Affairs M21-1, Part IV, Subpart ii

**Veterans Benefits Administration August 7, 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 IV, “Compensation, DIC, and Death Compensation Benefits,” Subpart ii, “Compensation.”***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
* update incorrect or obsolete references
* update the term “veteran” to “Veteran”
* update obsolete terminology, where appropriate
* remove references to specific claims-processing systems, where doing so does not affect the clarity of the instructions or information provided
* 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 add a new Block b to provide guidance on confirmed locations where service members have been exposed to mustard gas or lewisite. | M21-1, Part IV, Subpart ii, Chapter 1, Section F, Topic 1, Block b (IV.ii.2.F.1.b) |
| To provide a note that service connection (SC) will not be awarded if the claimed condition is due to the Veteran’s willful misconduct or there is affirmative evidence that establishes a non-service-related supervening condition or event. | IV.ii.2.F.1.c |
| * To provide guidance that Veterans eligible for benefits based on exposure to mustard gas or lewisite include those exposed on a case-by-case basis with military service in Iraq.
* To add a note that Veterans who participated in mustard gas testing prior to 1968 have been released from vows of secrecy by March 9, 1993, order of Deputy Defense Secretary William J. Perry.
* To add a note that participation in mustard agent and Lewisite testing can be considered a stressor in determining SC for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
 | IV.ii.2.F.1.d |
| * To delete obsolete information about retention of claims at the local RO if they were received before January 19, 2005.
* To provide guidance that claims or appeals based on mustard agent or Lewisite exposure received on or after January 19, 2005, will be mailed or electronically transferred to Muskogee Regional Office (RO).
* To provide references regarding priority processing and transferring electronic claims folders.
* To add a note that Muskogee will retain jurisdiction of any new claims received after receipt of a mustard gas claim.
* To remove the requirement that final rating decisions should be emailed to Compensation Service.
 | IV.ii.2.F.2.b |
| To add guidance that, in addition to controlling a claim based on exposure to a mustard agent or lewisite with a standard compensation end product (EP), it is necessary to establish an EP 688. | IV.ii.2.F.3.a |
| To replace Modern Awards Processing – Development (MAP-D) guidance with guidance specific to the Veteran’s Benefits Management System (VBMS).  | IV.ii.2.F.3.b |
| To add a new Block c with guidance on requesting access to the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Chemical Biological Warfare Exposure System (Chem-Bio) database. | IV.ii.2.F.3.c |
| To provide a revised e-mail address for Compensation Service’s mustard gas mailbox. | IV.ii.2.F.3.d |
| To revise the address in the box for sending the Veteran’s service personnel records for exposure verification from 212 to 211B. | IV.ii.2.F.3.e |
| To provide guidance on coding in VBMS-Rating (VBMS-R) for conditions claimed or determined to be related to mustard gas. | IV.ii.2.F.3.f |

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| Rescissions |  |

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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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