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Chapter 1 APPLICATION PROCESSING OVERVIEW

1.01 Introduction

This chapter is an overview of how the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Division processes applications from Veterans seeking Chapter 31 services. It covers roles and responsibilities, establishment of eligibility, types of claims and the methods used to process a claim. Although a program specialist may be the primary person processing an application, each staff member should have a vested interest in how the application process works. It is ultimately the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor's (VRC's) responsibility to ensure the accuracy of available benefits and the type and duration of services rendered. Statutory and regulatory references are provided throughout this chapter.

1.02 Reference and Resources

Law:	38 United States Code (U.S.C.) Chapter 11
Regulation:	38 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 3.7
VA Form (VAF):	VAF 28-1900, Disabled Veterans Application for Vocational Rehabilitation
Website:	www.ebenefits.va.gov

1.03 Roles and Responsibilities

a. Veteran or Servicemember

Submits VAF 28-1900 Disabled Veterans Application for Vocational Rehabilitation (see Appendix O, VA Forms) either by:

1. Mailing it to his/her closest Regional Office (RO).
2. Submitting it electronically on eBenefits through Veterans On Line Application (VONAPP) at www.ebenefits.va.gov
3. Bringing the form into an RO for processing.

b. VR&E Division

- Ensures applications are processed, and basic eligibility and entitlement determinations are completed accurately and in a timely manner.
- Provides due process when the Veteran does not meet the basic eligibility or entitlement criteria.

c. VR&E Employee

- Receives and processes formal claims and responds to informal claims (see M28R.IV.A.2 for more information on formal and informal claims).
- Obtains disability rating information from the Veteran's claims folder and Share (a Microsoft Windows-based application which is utilized by the Regional Offices (RO) to access the Beneficiary Inquiry Records Locator System (BIRLS), Corporate Record, Pending Issue File (PIF), Payment History File (PHF), Corporate database, Social Security Administration, and COVERS records).
- Obtains additional information from the Veteran, when necessary.
- Verifies disability and memorandum ratings through Share.
- Generates a Chapter 31 Generated Eligibility Determination (GED) printout using Benefits Delivery Network (BDN) (see Appendix AE, GED Tear Sheet Sample). For more information on GED and how to process an application, see M28R.IV.A.2.
- Calculates the period of eligibility.
- Takes into consideration deferrals and extensions; makes basic entitlement determinations as expeditiously as possible.
- Creates the Counseling/Evaluation/Rehabilitation (CER) folder.
- Disallows claims, when applicable.
- Provides procedural and appellate rights to the Veteran, when applicable.
- Enters data into and retrieves information from BDN and Corporate WINRS (CWINRS).

1.04 Eligibility Criteria

When a Veteran files an application for Chapter 31 benefits, VR&E performs a review of the Veteran's eligibility for the program. Before the claim is processed, VR&E needs to know:

a. Qualifying Military Service

The claimant must have served on active duty in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard or other qualifying service specified in 38 CFR 3.7 on or after September 16, 1940.

b. Character of Service

1. He/she must be a Servicemember hospitalized, pending release or discharge from active service.
2. He/she must have been released or discharged unconditionally (having been eligible for complete separation) from active service under conditions other than dishonorable.
3. He/she must have completed a period of obligated service under other than dishonorable conditions despite a subsequent unconditional discharge, which the VA considers to have been issued under dishonorable conditions.

c. Service-Connected Disability Status

A service-connected disability is a disability incurred or aggravated while a Servicemember is serving on active duty in the military for which he/she is monetarily compensated.

d. Servicemember Awaiting Discharge

For a Servicemember hospitalized or recently hospitalized for a service-connected disability who is awaiting separation from service, the VA must determine that the disability is likely to be compensable under 38 U.S.C. Chapter 11. This includes any Servicemember hospitalized under the jurisdiction of a military service secretary in a military, VA or other non-military hospital.

e. Prior Chapter 31 Application or Entitlement Determination

Depending on the type of Generated Eligibility Determination (GED) processed, the program specialist will either create a new Chapter 31 Master Record in BDN or update an existing Chapter 31 Master Record.

1.05 Application Processing Methods

There are two methods used to process an application:

a. GED

GED is the original claims process system that requires the use of BDN.

Characteristics include:

- Requires the use of BDN.
- Does not update CWINRS records.
- Requires 22 steps to process a claim.

b. AutoGED

AutoGED is a claims processing system that requires the use of CWINRS.

Characteristics include:

- Streamlines the GED process by pulling information from Share and BDN to complete a GED.
- Reduces the number of steps to process a claim manually from 22 steps to five steps.

1.06 Claim Types

Review of the Veteran's record will determine the appropriate type of GED processing:

a. Original

A first request to receive Chapter 31 benefits and a Master Record does not exist.

b. Reapplication/Reopened

Veteran had a prior claim for Chapter 31 benefits and already has a Master Record.

c. GED Update

A GED update is used to remove a temporary entitlement decision, memorandum rating or in-service code, recalculate entitlement usage, and add/remove a military retiree code and/or Individual Unemployability (IU) designation and correct mistakes.

Note: For more information on receiving and processing Chapter 31 applications, see M28R.IV.A.2.