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## Chapter 5. Correspondence

### 1. General Guidance for Processing Correspondence

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**Introduction** This topic contains general guidance for processing correspondence, including:

- the importance of correspondence
- systems used to generate correspondence
- general rules for effective correspondence
- formatting of written correspondence
- formatting of electronic correspondence, and
- preparing customer-requested letters for the visually impaired customer

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**Change Date** February 13, 2019

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**a. The Importance of Correspondence** VA routinely communicates with customers in writing. Correspondence from VA to all customers must be clear, concise, and effective, and should aid effective communication and decision making. The reader must be able to clearly understand the message in a single reading, and the correspondence must be free of errors in formatting, organization, style, substance, and grammatical correctness.

Prior to sending out any correspondence to a customer, the employee should complete a thorough review for quality and correctness.

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**b. Systems Used to Generate Correspondence** The following systems are used to generate VBA correspondence letters to customers (the list may not be all inclusive):

- Customer Relationship Management/Unified Desktop-Optimized (CRM/UD-O)
  - Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS)
  - Letter Creator (houses the most common letters not in VBMS)
  - Personal Computer-Generated Letters (PCGL)
  - Veterans Service Network (VETSNET) letters
- 

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**c. General Rules for Effective Correspondence**

All correspondence generated by VA must:

- provide complete, accurate, and understandable information,
  - consider the reader’s point of view,
  - be professional, sincere, and empathetic, and have proper grammar, tone, and sentence structure.
- 

**d. Formatting of Written Correspondence**

All official written correspondence should contain the following:

- VA seal and generic heading
- date the correspondence is generated
- reply/reference section
- employee ID with station number
- correct salutation with the correct name of the inquirer
- generic “RO Director” closing, to include VA contact information
- use Times New Roman font type
- appropriately formatted for visually impaired inquirer, if applicable
- courtesy copied to designated representative, if applicable.
- enclosures listed, if applicable

**Reference:** For more information on formatting for visually impaired inquirers, see M27-1, I.5.1.f.

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**e. Formatting of Electronic Correspondence**

All official electronic correspondence, e.g., IRIS responses, emails, etc., should contain the following:

- date of response
- employee ID with station number
- correct salutation with the correct name of the inquirer
- generic “RO Director” closing, to include VA contact information
- appropriately formatted for visually impaired inquirer, if applicable
- courtesy copied to designated representative, if applicable.
- enclosures listed, if applicable

**Reference:** For more information on formatting for visually impaired inquirers, see M27-1, I.5.1.f.

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**f. Preparing Customer-Requested Letters for a Visually – Impaired Customer**

A visually impaired Veteran is any Veteran

- with visual impairment (SC or non-service-connected) for which VA has assigned a disability rating of at least 70 percent, or
- who has expressly requested that VA accommodate his/her visual impairment (whether VA has evaluated the disability or not) with modified correspondence and communication methods.

**Note:** Claims processors are responsible for ensuring that visually impaired Veterans' claims folders and corporate records are appropriately flashed for ease of recognition.

**Reference:** For more information on recognition of visually impaired Veterans see M21-1, III.v.2.B.2.a.

When preparing a customer-requested letter for a customer with a visual impairment, ensure that VA Form 21-0178, Visually Impaired Veteran, is included in the electronic folder. The following guidelines must be incorporated:

- use either Times New Roman or Arial font
- font size should be largely 18 point
- the width of a column within any table, chart, or box should be adjusted to fit the larger font.

**Note:** After adjusting, if the table, chart, or box cannot accommodate the larger font, then utilize the largest font for those characters within it that will fit neatly.

- lines should be 1.5 spaces apart to the extent possible
- the header and footer may generally be left as generated unless it can be easily altered as indicated above
- the letter's default one-inch margin, block-paragraph style, and left justification should **not** usually be altered

Outgoing envelopes may need to be addressed manually, as the windows in standard envelopes may not be able to accommodate the increased size of the address section of the letter.

**Note:** These print parameters are based on the article, Tips for Making Print More Readable, published by the American Foundation for the Blind.

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## 2. Signature Authority for Correspondence

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**Introduction** This topic contains information on the signature authority for correspondence, including:

- correspondence prepared by the
    - National Call Centers (NCC)
    - National Inquiry Routing and Information System (IRIS) Response Center (NIRC),
    - National Pension Call Center (NPCC), and
    - Regional Office (RO) Public Contact Teams (PCT)
  - guidelines for signing NCC, IRC, NPCC, and PCT correspondence, and
  - special signature provisions.
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**a. Correspondence Prepared by NCC, IRC, and NPCC** Correspondence prepared by the National Call Centers (NCCs), IRIS Response Center (IRC), National Pension Call Center (NPCC), and RO PCT will be released under the authority granted to the NCC Manager (NCCM), the NIRC Manager (NIRCM), the NPCC Manager (NPCCM), and the Veterans Service Center Manager (VSCM) or, in the absence of the NCCM, NIRCM, NPCCM, or VSCM, the person designated as acting manager.

Correspondence prepared and released by the NCC, NIRC, NPCC, and PCT will be prepared with the standard RO header and signature block.

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**b. Special Signature Provisions** If there are compelling reasons, such as a special correspondence response or an escalated issue, that the NCCM, NIRCM, NPCCM, or VSCM feels requires the signature of the NCCM, NIRCM, NPCCM, or VSCM, the director may authorize NCC, NIRC, NPCC, or PCT correspondence to be signed with the name and title of the NCCM, NIRCM, NPCCM, or VSCM instead of the standard RO signature block.

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### 3. Handling Incoming Special Correspondence

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**Introduction** This topic provides guidance and information on recognizing and handling the various types of incoming correspondence received by VA, including:

- definitions for *special correspondence*, and
- identifying, processing, and following up on special correspondence

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**a. Definitions for Special Correspondence** *Special Correspondence* is mail, to include email to an RO's Congressional email box, which requires expedited processing, control, and response due to the subject matter and/or the position of the correspondent.

Examples of special correspondence include:

- Congressional mail,
- White House mail, to include referrals from VBA's Office of Client Relations,
- mail from national headquarters of service organizations, and
- private attorney correspondence.

*Simple Special Correspondence* can be easily answered with information that is readily available in the system of records and must have a final response provided within 10 business days from receipt of the request.

*Complex Special Correspondence* requires extensive information or research, can't be easily answered with information that is readily available in the system of records, and must have a final response provided within 30 business days from the receipt of the request.

**Note:** The first business day following receipt of the correspondence item is considered to be day one of the business day requirement for final response.

**Note:** If special correspondence is assigned with a designated due date that is less than the standard timeframe, i.e., 10 days or 30 days, the requested correspondence item must be completed by the assigned due date.

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**b. Processing Special Correspondence**

The mail processing activity and the Intake Processing Center will identify mail that should be immediately routed to the appropriate team for expedited processing.

All employees handling special correspondence will maintain appropriate controls to ensure prompt reply or acknowledgement.

The table below contains instructions for processing special correspondence:

When ...	Then...
mail is identified as special correspondence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish EP 500, (500SPCORR)</li> <li>• Establish the date of receipt as the earliest date stamp identified on the mail or the Centralized Mail (CM) date applied as directed in M21-1, III.ii.1.C.1.a.</li> <li>• Log correspondence into VA Form 27-7288c, <i>Daily Record of Veterans Services Activities – Correspondence</i>, or electronic equivalent</li> <li>• Determine if the special correspondence is to be classified as simple or complex</li> <li>• Provide a final response within the established timeframe as outlined in M27-1, I.5.3.a</li> <li>• Upload the inquiry and response into the eFolder (if paper file, associate correspondence with c-file).</li> </ul>
email is identified as special correspondence from an RO’s Congressional email box	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish EP 500, (500SPCORR)</li> <li>• Establish the date of receipt as the date the email was received into the Congressional inbox as directed in M21-1, III.ii.1.C.1.a.</li> <li>• Log correspondence into VA Form 27-7288c, <i>Daily Record of Veterans Services Activities – Correspondence</i>, or electronic equivalent</li> <li>• Determine if the special correspondence is to be classified as simple or complex</li> <li>• Provide a final response within the established timeframe as outlined in M27-1, I.5.3.a</li> <li>• Upload inquiry and response into the eFolder (if paper file associate correspondence with c-file).</li> </ul>



<p>a final response cannot be satisfied within ten business days for correspondence classified as Complex</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an interim response within 10 business days stating that a full response will be provided within 30 business days</li> <li>• Compose interim response letter in the Letter Creator Tool.</li> <li>• Upload interim response letter into eFolder (or associate with paper file as applicable)</li> <li>• Appropriately identify the document category and subject as outlined in block I.5.3.c and upload the correspondence item in to the eFolder.</li> <li>• Log interim response into VA Form 27-7288c, <i>Daily Record of Veterans Services Activities – Correspondence</i>, or electronic equivalent</li> </ul>
<p>the final response is sent out for special correspondence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upload final response letter into eFolder (or associate with paper file as applicable).</li> <li>• Appropriately identify the document category and subject as outlined in block I.5.3.c and upload the correspondence item in to the eFolder.</li> <li>• Log release of correspondence into VA Form 27-7288c, <i>Daily Record of Veterans Services Activities – Correspondence</i>, or electronic equivalent</li> <li>• Clear EP 500</li> </ul>

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**c. Identifying Special Correspondence in the eFolder**

Use the table below to properly categorize special correspondence documents in the eFolder.

If the third party is...	and the correspondence is...	then categorize the correspondence as...
the White House, to include referrals from VBA’s Office of Client Relations	from the third party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Category Type: <i>Correspondence – Incoming: Third Party Correspondence</i></li> <li>• Subject: White House letter</li> </ul>
	an interim response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Category Type: <i>Correspondence: Status Letter</i></li> <li>• Subject: White House 10-day interim response</li> </ul>
	a final response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Category Type: <i>Correspondence: Status Letter</i></li> <li>• Subject: White House final response</li> </ul>
members of Congress	from the third party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Category Type: <i>Correspondence: Congressionals</i></li> <li>• Subject: Congressional letter</li> </ul>
	an interim response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Category Type: <i>Correspondence: Status Letter</i></li> <li>• Subject: Congressional 10-day interim response</li> </ul>
	a final response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Category Type: <i>Correspondence: Status Letter</i></li> <li>• Subject: Congressional final response</li> </ul>
National headquarters of a service organization	from the third party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Category Type: <i>Correspondence – Incoming: Third Party Correspondence</i></li> <li>• Subject: National VSO letter</li> </ul>

	an interim response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Category Type: <i>Correspondence: Status Letter</i></li> <li>• Subject: National VSO 10-day interim response</li> </ul>
	a final response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Category Type: <i>Correspondence: Status Letter</i></li> <li>• Subject: National VSO final response</li> </ul>
a private attorney	from the third party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Category Type: <i>Correspondence – Incoming: Third Party Correspondence</i></li> <li>• Subject: private attorney letter</li> </ul>
	an interim response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Category Type: <i>Correspondence: Status Letter</i></li> <li>• Subject: private attorney 10-day interim response</li> </ul>
	a final response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Category Type: <i>Correspondence: Status Letter</i></li> <li>• Subject: private attorney final response</li> </ul>

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## 4. Handling Various Types of Incoming Routine Correspondence

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**Introduction** This topic provides guidance and information on recognizing and handling the various types of incoming correspondence received by VA, including:

- definition of *routine correspondence*,
  - identifying, processing, and following up on routine correspondence,
  - handling redundant and unnecessary correspondence,
  - handling misdirected mail dealing with appellate issues, and
  - handling correspondence that is not associated with a claims folder
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**a. Definitions for Routine Correspondence** *Routine correspondence* is correspondence from a member of the public not identified as evidence or a claim.

**e** Routine correspondence is controlled, and is to have a final response provided to the customer within 10 business days.

**Note:** The first business day following receipt of the correspondence item is day one of the business day requirement for final response.

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**b. Processing Routine Correspondence** The table below contains instructions for processing routine correspondence.

**e** Establishing EP 400 for routine correspondence will entail the “one-time PCLR” function in which the 400 EP is established and cleared with a single command only when a customer’s correspondence is received and responded to at the same time.

A full establishment of the EP 400 will occur if the response is not able to be provided to the customer immediately and/or is brokered from a centralized mail hub site.

**Note:** Routine correspondence requests that are received and processed by a centralized mail hub site will be established as an EP 400 with the Brokered – Internal special issue and then brokered to the appropriate Regional Office for action. The Regional Office of jurisdiction is found in the Veteran’s Profile in VBMS as the Award Station.

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Do not establish an EP 400 for correspondence when there is a request for general information or information not associated with a claim number. See M27-1, I.5.4.f.

Use the table below to properly manage routine correspondence.

<b>When ...</b>	<b>Then...</b>
mail is received via a brokered EP 400 from a centralized mail hub site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Log correspondence into VA Form 27-7288c, <i>Daily Record of Veterans Services Activities – Correspondence</i>, or electronic equivalent</li> </ul>
a final response cannot be satisfied within 10 business days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an interim response stating that a full response will be provided</li> <li>• Upload interim response letter into eFolder (or associate with paper file as applicable)</li> <li>• Identify the document category type as <i>Correspondence: Status Letter</i> and include in the subject column: “Routine correspondence - 10-day interim letter”</li> <li>• Log response into VA Form 27-7288c, <i>Daily Record of Veterans Services Activities – Correspondence</i>, or electronic equivalent</li> </ul>
a final response is provided for routine correspondence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upload response letter into eFolder (or associate with paper file as applicable)</li> <li>• Identify the document category type as <i>Correspondence: Correspondence</i> and include in the subject column: “Final routine correspondence response letter”</li> <li>• Log release of correspondence into VA Form 27-7288c, <i>Daily Record of Veterans Services Activities – Correspondence</i>, or electronic equivalent</li> <li>• Clear EP 400</li> </ul>

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**c. Handling Redundant Correspondence**

If a claimant or other correspondent has been informed repeatedly of the status of a claim or appeal or received the requested information and continues to write to VA on the same issue(s), follow the steps in the table below:

<b>Step</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>1</b>	Carefully review correspondence to ensure new issues are not raised.
<b>2</b>	Ensure that a further response would serve no useful purpose.
<b>3</b>	Annotate correspondence with “No Action Necessary” (the use of “NAN” is acceptable), sign or initial, and date.
<b>4</b>	Provide a Note in VBMS explaining the reason for the NAN.
<b>5</b>	Upload correspondence in Veteran’s eFolder or file in claim folder if eFolder does not exist.

**Note:** If a request for information under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)/Privacy Act (PA) is received, such a request must be answered notwithstanding the provisions of this topic.

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**d. Handling Unnecessary Correspondence**

Every correspondent will be furnished, insofar as the limitations of the law permit, with a fully informative reply to his/her letter.

Once the correspondent has been advised of the disposition of the case, do not initiate further correspondence in the absence of subsequent correspondence on the correspondent’s part.

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**e. Taking Credit for Correspondence Not Related to a Claim Number or for General Information**

When correspondence or FOIA/PA requests are received that are not associated with a claim number or are a request for general information, credit should be taken in the Outreach Reporting Tool. Record the correspondence or FOIA/PA request in the “Special Contacts & Mailings” tab.

Log these correspondences into VA Form 27-7288c, *Daily Record of Veterans Services Activities – Correspondence*, or electronic equivalent.

Do not establish an End Product for correspondence that is not associated with a claim number.

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## 5. Types of Customer-Requested Outgoing Routine Correspondence

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- Introduction** This topic contains information on the preparation of customer-requested routine correspondence, including:
- benefits verification or “amounts” letters
  - “amounts” letters to estranged spouses
  - service verification letters
  - summary of benefits letters
  - Civil Service preference letters
  - Civil Service preference letters for Veterans returned to Active Duty, and
  - commissary letters.

*Note:* Routine correspondence responses are not limited to the above-mentioned letters.

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**a. Benefit Verification Letters**

Customers routinely request benefit verification or general “amounts” letters. These are letters verifying the monthly dollar amount a Veteran or beneficiary receives.

A request for proof of VA disability benefits may also include the *type* of disability and percentage, which are both protected under the Privacy Act.

Benefit verification letters generally verify the gross amount, not the net amount received. Gross amount refers to the amount the Veteran or beneficiary is **entitled to** each month before deductions. Net amount refers to the amount that is **paid out** by VA after deductions.

Many times, a beneficiary will not be receiving his or her full entitlement amount. Some common examples of this are:

- A debt repayment
- An insurance premium taken out
- An apportionment is paid out for a dependent

*Note:* Deductions are still considered income. When a customer is asking for a benefit verification letter, use the gross entitlement amount, or both the gross and net amounts.

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**a. Benefit Verification Letters, cont'd**

If a customer requests a benefit verification letter for the total yearly amount received, use the following language:

“Our records indicate that for calendar year XXX (i.e., appropriate year), the total amount of benefits issued was \$XX, XXX.XX.”

When calculating annual income for a calendar year, use 12 months at one rate to calculate the total annual benefit, unless there has been a payment rate change other than a cost of living increase (COLA). In those cases, you will need to calculate the number of months paid at each rate, considering the check received on December 31<sup>st</sup> as the payment amount received in January.

Unauthorized third parties may request written verification of the gross benefit amount. In this instance, redact all Veteran/beneficiary personally identifiable information (PII) except his/her name.

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**b. Amount Letters to Estranged Spouses (For Social Security Purposes)**

On occasion, VA receives inquiries from estranged spouses requesting a “breakdown” of benefits letter for Social Security purposes.

Typically, this occurs when VA is paying benefits for an estranged spouse on a pension award and the Social Security Administration needs to know what portion of the Veteran’s benefit is attributable to the spouse.

If the estranged spouse is not receiving benefits under an apportionment award, do not provide this information.

If the requester indicates he/she needs this information for Social Security Administration purposes, advise the requester to contact the Social Security Administration and have that agency request the needed information directly.

Explain to the requester that our inability to provide this information is due to privacy regulations.

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### c. Service Verification Letters

Sometimes used in lieu of a DD Form 214, *Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty*, or other discharge document, service verification letters outline the specifics of a Veteran's military service and certify the information to be accurate.

For customers asking for a copy of a DD Form 214, always ask if a service verification letter will suffice.

**Note:** Prior to preparing the requested letter, review the system of records to ensure that the Veteran's service has been verified.

To generate a service verification letter, the following information must be verified in VA systems:

- All the service information including Entry on Duty (EOD) and Release from Active Duty (RAD) dates, branch of service, character of discharge, and separation reason,
- Character of service must show "HON" or "UHC,"  
**Note:** The service verification letter states that the Veteran is "honorably" discharged. For VA and Office of Personnel Management (OPM) purposes, discharges of Honorable (HON) and Under Honorable Conditions (UHC) count as being "honorably" discharged.
- Branch of service code is *not* "ARNG" or "ANG,"
- Separation reason is "SAT," and
- If the Veteran's RAD is prior to June 1, 1968, there is a "Y" in the VER field, or
- If the Veteran's RAD is June 1, 1968, or later there is a "Y" in either the VER field or VADS field.

### d. Summary of Benefits Letters

This letter replaces VA Form 20-5455, *Statement from Benefit Payment Records*, which is no longer available.

This letter should be utilized to provide verification for eligibility determination for local, state, and other benefits.

If the customer indicates that the Summary of Benefits Letter does not contain the necessary information to verify eligibility for a local, state, or other benefit, and if the letter cannot be modified to include the required information, a letter generated by the regional office is required. Public Contact Representatives must initiate a Veterans Assistance Inquiry to the regional office with geographical jurisdiction to request the necessary letter.

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**e. Civil Service Preference Letters**

By law, Veterans who are disabled or who served on active duty in the U.S. armed forces during certain specified time periods or in military campaigns are entitled to preference over others when hiring from competitive lists of eligible candidates, and also in retention during a reduction in force (RIF).

The following civil service preference letters are available for use:

- non-service connected ([NSC](#)) [pension](#)
- [30 percent disability or greater](#)
- [at least 10 percent, but less than 30 percent disability](#)
- [less than 10 percent disability](#)
  
- [surviving spouse](#)
- [spouse of 100 percent disabled Veteran](#)
- parent of deceased Veteran
- parent of 100 percent disabled Veteran

**Note:** Because provisions of the Privacy Act cover the release of this information, the Veteran **must** provide consent before a preference letter may be sent to a third person. However, the letter may be released directly to the Veteran.

**Important:** If the Veteran/relative is applying for a Federal job, Form SF-15, *Application for 10-Point Preference (To Be Used by Veterans and Their Relatives)*, must be attached to the Civil Service preference letter.

For more information on Civil Service Preference Letters and eligibility criteria, see M21-1 III.vi.7.2.

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**f. Disability Percent Letters or Civil Service Preference Letters Requested by Veterans Returned to Active Duty**

For Veterans requesting a disability percent letter or Civil Service preference letter (CSPL) and the Veteran's record reflects a terminated status because he/she returned to active duty, do not send any letter stating the Veteran is evaluated at X% or eligible to receive compensation at a particular dollar amount.

According to [OPM guidance](#), to receive a preference, the Veteran must have been discharged or released from active duty in the Armed Forces under honorable or general conditions. Therefore, if the Veteran is still on active duty, no CSPL can be provided.

Advise a Servicemember who is on active duty and wants this type of letter that VA can provide the letter, if appropriate, after he/she has been released from active duty.

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**g. Commissary Letters**

Unlimited exchange and commissary store privileges are available to:

- honorably discharged Veterans with a service-connected disability rated at 100 percent, to include a rating of Individual Unemployability (IU),
- unremarried surviving spouses of 100 percent service-connected Veterans,
- retired members of the armed forces, and
- recipients of the Medal of Honor, and their dependents and orphans.

The following commissary letters are available for use:

- [no future exam](#)
- [future exam](#)
- [surviving spouse](#)

**Important:** Include DD Form 1172, *Application for Uniformed Services Identification Card DEERS Enrollment*, as an attachment with this letter.

**Notes:**

- VA provides certification of total disability.
  - National Guard members, Reservists, and their dependents may also be eligible.
- 

**h. Mailing and Faxing Correspondence**

Correspondence may be mailed or faxed to any mailing address or fax number identified by a first party requestor after ID protocol requirements have been met.

**Reference:** For additional information about ID Protocol see M27-1, I.3.15

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## 6. Developing Claims Using Telephone, E-Mail, and Facsimile

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### Introduction

This topic contains information on:

- the issues suitable for telephone, e-mail, and facsimile development
  - the procedures for developing claims, and
  - documenting information received by telephone
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### Change Date

February 13, 2019

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### a. Issues Suitable for Telephone, E-Mail, and Facsimile Development

ROs, NCCs, the NPCC, and the NIRC should make full use of telephone, e-mail, and facsimile machines to develop compensation and pension claims.

The following issues are suitable for telephone, e-mail, and facsimile development (not all inclusive):

- Social Security numbers (SSNs) of dependents, including the Social Security Number Verification Match  
*Reference:* For more information on the Social Security Number Verification Match, refer to the M21-1, X.02
  - mailing addresses
  - dates of birth
  - Reserve or National Guard unit information, such as unit addresses
  - information concerning retired, severance, or readjustment pay
  - names and addresses of physicians or medical record numbers
  - clarification of employment information (VA Form 21-4140 must be returned to the SOJ with a signature)
  - establishment of, and changes in dependency status, such as the name and address of person having custody of children
  - income information, such as a change in income or date of receipt of first Social Security payment
  - clarification of expenses
  - verification of Medicaid-covered nursing home status
  - burial claim clarification information, such as status of unpaid bills, and
  - whether the Veteran has service treatment or other records or not.
- 

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**b. Procedures for Developing Claims**

The following procedures apply when developing claims using telephone, e-mail, and facsimile:

- Exercise sound discretion when requesting information by telephone or e-mail to ensure that the source of information is reliable.
  - Always ensure you properly verify the source providing the information using the SSN, branch of service, date of birth, and/or other pertinent information to confirm identity.
  - If the person is unable to furnish verifying information, or if you remain uncertain of the person's identity, complete development by letter.
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**c. Documenting Information Received by Telephone**

Document all evidentiary information received by telephone from the claimant on the appropriate *VA Form 27-0820, (series)*, and appropriately route the *VA Form 27-0820 (series)* for action.

If Veteran has a power of attorney, send the representative a copy of the *VA Form 27-0820*, and enter an appropriate note into the system of records to verify that a copy was sent to the power of attorney on the claims file copy.

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## 7. Additional Considerations When Claims Using Telephone, E-Mail, and Facsimile

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**Introduction** This topic contains information on contacting claimants or Veterans using mail, e-mail, and facsimile, including:

- providing information by mail, e-mail, or facsimile
  - documenting information received by e-mail or facsimile
  - using e-mail or facsimile as written notice of an event, and
  - documents suitable for receipt by e-mail or facsimile.
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**a. Providing Information by Mail, E-Mail, or Facsimile** When a claimant requests information from VA via mail, e-mail, or fax, return the incoming letter along with the requested information unless you are sending a self-mailing pamphlet.

Important:

- Do *not* use a letter of transmittal unless additional information is required.
  - Do *not* mail procedural information; however, the following information may be mailed:
    - summary pamphlets
    - VA benefits information, and
    - general entitlement information.
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**b. Information Received by E-Mail or Facsimile** All information received by e-mail from the claimant or beneficiary must be added to the electronic folder, if available, or claims folder if electronic folder does not exist.

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**c. Documents Suitable for Receipt by E-Mail or Facsimile** Accept documents, except original applications and separation documents intended for proof of service to establish entitlement to benefits, via facsimile or e-mail.

Any information received by e-mail from the claimant or beneficiary must be placed in the electronic folder, if available, or claims folder if electronic folder does not exist.

**Important:** If there is any question about the validity of any documents received by facsimile or e-mail, request the original.

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## 8. Using VA Form 27-0820 (Series)

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**Introduction** This topic contains information on using *VA Form 27-0820 (Series)*, including:

- the purpose of the *VA Form 27-0820 (Series)*
  - what information to include on *VA Form 27-0820*
  - examples of appropriate uses of *VA Form 27-0820*
  - when not to use the *VA Form 27-0820 (Series)* forms, and
  - the seven versions of *VA Form 27-0820 (Series)*.
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**a. Purpose of VA Form 27-0820 (Series)** *VA Form 27-0820* is a series of seven forms. The purpose of the *VA Form 27-0820 (Series)* is to:

- record discussions involving potentially controversial matters between VA employees and claimants, representatives of claimants, or other persons,
  - record evidentiary information or facts received by a VA employee that may supplement the record,
  - request action be taken in response to information provided by the customer, or
  - document information provided to the customer or actions taken by the VA employee.
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**b. What Information to Include on VA Form 27-0820**

Each *VA Form 27-0820* submitted must include:

- the date of contact,
  - the identifying information for the Veteran and contact information for the Veteran or individual contacted,
  - a complete and accurate reflection of the information brought out during the contact,
  - indication that the notification of action statement was read to the customer (if applicable),
  - indication that the proper Identification Protocol requirements were met (if applicable),
  - the designated representative information (if applicable),
  - the appropriate employee identification and signature, and show the action taken by the employee as a result of the contact.
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*Continued on next page*

**c. Examples of  
Appropriate  
Uses of VA  
Form 27-0820**

The use of *VA Form 27-0820* includes, but is not limited to:

- controversial matters when additional evidence is received,
  - complaints regarding an action taken or lack of service,
  - first notices of death of a Veteran or beneficiary when there is reason to believe the VA has not been notified otherwise,
  - explanations of facts or information which might influence a claimant's entitlement, either adversely or favorably, to certain VA benefits, and
  - special situations for the purpose of effecting an immediate check issuance.
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**d. When Not to  
Use VA Form  
27-0820**

Do *not* use *VA Form 27-0820*:

- in lieu of a letter to request information or
  - to document information that must be submitted in writing by the customer.
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**e. Seven  
Versions of VA  
Form 27-0820**

The following versions of *VA Form 27-0820* are available:

- *VA Form 27-0820*, [Report of General Information](#)
  - *VA Form 27-0820a*, [Report of First Notice of Death](#)
  - *VA Form 27-0820b*, [Report of Nursing Home or Assisted Living Information](#)
  - *VA Form 27-0820c*, [Report of Defense Finance & Accounting Service \(DFAS\)](#)
  - *VA Form 27-0820d*, [Report of Non-Receipt of Payment](#)
  - *VA Form 27-0820e*, [Report of Incarceration](#)
  - *VA Form 27-0820f*, [Report of Month of Death](#)
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