



Veterans Affairs

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Director

Fact Sheet #6
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WHAT EVERY COUNTY VETERANS AFFAIRS CUSTOMER SHOULD KNOW

The Purpose of the County Veterans Services Office

Thank you for your visit to obtain services from the San Bernardino County Veterans Affairs Department. This office is not affiliated with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (Federal VA). The purpose of San Bernardino County Veterans Affairs is to advocate for veterans and their families seeking Federal, State, or local VA benefits.

Our employees can help you:

- Determine potential eligibility for benefits
- Complete necessary forms
- Submit forms for processing
- Obtain required supporting evidence
- Prepare an appeal, if necessary and when appropriate

Claim Processing Time

There are many factors that can affect the processing time of a claim.

- Due to a nation-wide backlog, the average Federal VA claim processing time is 12 to 18 months, and appeals can take several years.
- Some claims are outsourced to other Federal VA regional offices.
- Changes in VA laws and regulations increase the time the VA must take to process claims.

Claim Status Requests

Requesting a status check of your claim from the Federal VA slows the claims process. Therefore:

- Please allow at least 6 months from the filing date to inquire as to the status of your claim.

- Our staff will verify that your claim has been received by the Federal VA.
- Contact our office if you have any concerns or questions about the submission of your claim.

Working With Veterans Service Organizations

Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) can assist in the processing of your claim. Our staff will work with the VSO of your choice and can advise you about the different VSOs.

The VSO:

- Is a liaison between you and the Federal VA; however, ***we want to remain your primary point of contact.***
- Offices are located inside the Federal VA and their staff can access the claim file if questions about the claim arise.
- Reviews mail sent in support of the claim and correspondence from the Federal VA.
- Provides a representative to accompany you to and advocate for you if you require a hearing with the Federal VA.

The Claims Process

Every claim goes through the same basic steps once it reaches the VA:

- We submit your completed claim to the appropriate VA Regional Office.
- Once received, the VA reviews your claim and may request additional supporting information.
- The VA will attempt to obtain your service medical records and VA medical records. They will also try to obtain any private medical records that they are informed of.
- The VA may schedule a medical examination if appropriate.
- Then, the VA will decide your claim based on all of evidence.

Completeness of Claim

It takes the VA longer to process an incomplete claim than it does a well-documented claim. Although the VA has a duty to assist in developing claims, ultimately, the burden of proof is on the applicant.

Claims processing delays can be caused by the following:

- Incomplete or inaccurate claims
- A lack of supporting evidence
- Failure to submit requested records and information
- Failure to attend required VA medical exams



Our Commitment to You

- We will strive to provide accurate and comprehensive counseling concerning available benefits.
- We will help you complete and submit all necessary claim forms.
- We will work with you to obtain evidence (medical evidence and personal testimonies) to support your claim.
- We will actively cooperate with the VSO of your choice to ensure adequate representation of your claim during the VA decision process.
- We will manage your claim during and after the VA decision process.
- We will review the VA's decision to ensure you receive all benefits to which you are entitled.
- We will help you research and write most appeals.

What We Cannot and/or Will Not Do

- We do not pay for any records or copying of records.
- We do not have control over your claim once it has been submitted to the Federal VA.
- We will not attempt to persuade the VA to hasten processing your claim out of turn. As advocates, we will not ask the VA to process one veteran's claim over another.

- We cannot change the eligibility requirements of VA programs. They are determined by Congress and administered by the VA.
- We will not knowingly submit inaccurate, altered or edited documents to the VA or other agencies.
- We cannot represent claimants in hearings with the Federal VA.

What You Can Do To Help

To achieve the best possible outcome, we need be partners in this process. Please help us with the following:

- When the Federal VA sends you correspondence, please contact us so we can determine if a response is required.
- When visiting our office, please bring all Federal VA correspondence and requested evidence so we can fully assist you.
- Please do not submit information directly to the VA or through another service organization, as this reduces our ability to serve you and effectively manage your case. If you have something to submit, please bring it to our office.
- Please complete a Customer Service Survey every time you visit our office. These surveys help us fine tune our services so we can better help our clients

Veterans Affairs Office Locations:

- 222 W. Hospitality Lane, Third Floor, San Bernardino, CA 92415-0470 (909) 382-3290
- 15900 Smoke Tree Street, Hesperia, CA 92345 (760) 995-8010
- 8575 Haven Ave., Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730 (909-948-6470
- **Or call Toll Free from anywhere in San Bernardino County : 1-866-4SB-Vets (1-866-472-8387)**