



**Department of  
Veterans Affairs**

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# News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
October 26, 2010

## **New Medical Forms Will Streamline Veterans Claims Process *Physician Questionnaires to Boost Disability Exam Efficiency***

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has released three new disability benefits questionnaires for physicians of Veterans applying for VA disability compensation benefits. This initiative marks the beginning of a major reform of the physicians' guides and automated routines that will streamline the claims process for injured or ill Veterans.

“This is a major step in the transformation of VA’s business processes that is yielding improvements for Veterans as we move to eliminate the disability claims backlog by 2015,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.

These new questionnaires are the first of 79 disability benefits questionnaires that will guide Veterans’ personal physicians, as well as VA physicians, in the evaluation of the most frequent medical conditions affecting Veterans.

Accurate and timely medical evaluations are a critical element of VA’s continued commitment to high-quality and prompt decisions about the nature and degree of conditions afflicting Veterans. Streamlining this process by directly involving Veterans’ treating physicians in providing specific information needed to evaluate their claims will lead to completeness in the examination and faster compensation decisions.

VA’s goal is to process all claims in fewer than 125 days with a decision quality rate no lower than 98 percent, a mark Secretary Shinseki has mandated by 2015. The physician questionnaire project is one of more than three dozen initiatives actively underway at VA, including a major technology modernization that will lead to paperless claims processing.

The disability benefits questionnaires are part of VA’s automated health records system which prompts VA physicians conducting disability examinations to include precise information in a standardized way to assist claims adjudicators in ensuring

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## **Medical Forms for Disability Compensation 2/2/2**

Veterans receive the benefits they deserve as quickly as possible. These VA examination results are electronically available to claims adjudicators in VA regional offices.

For Veterans who receive their care from private physicians, VA has placed the disability benefits questionnaires on its Internet site

(<http://www.vba.va.gov/disabilityexams>) with instructions for physicians to submit examination results on Veterans' behalf.

The first three questionnaires cover B-cell leukemia (such as hairy-cell leukemia), Parkinson's disease and ischemic heart disease. VA recently published a final regulation to be implemented Oct. 30 that will establish the presumption of eligibility to VA disability compensation benefits for Veterans with one of these three conditions who were exposed to Agent Orange, a herbicide agent used extensively in Vietnam.

In practical terms, Veterans who served in Vietnam during the war who have a "presumed" illness do not have to prove an association between their illnesses and their military service. This "presumption" establishes eligibility to VA compensation if their condition is disabling to a compensable level.

For additional information on the VA disability compensation program or additional presumptive disabilities for Veterans exposed to herbicide agents, contact VA at 800-827-1000 or visit <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/AO/claimherbicide.htm>.

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