M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, Chapter 1, Section A - Establishing New and Converting Old Claims Folders

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Topics
M21-1 Adjudication Procedures Manual >
Part 02 (Part II). Intake, Claims Establishment, Jurisdiction, and File Maintenance >
Subpart ii. Claims Folder Establishment, Maintenance, Jurisdiction, and Transfer >
Chapter 01. Claims Folder Establishment

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Overview

In This Section This section contains the following topics:

Topic	Topic Name
1	Assigning Claims Folder Numbers and Establishing Claims Folders
2	Claims Folder Formats

1. Assigning Claims Folder Numbers and Establishing Claims Folders

Introduction This topic contains information about the assignment of claims folder numbers and establishing claims folders, including

- associating records with a claims folder number
- how claims folders and numbers are established
- checking for a previously established or duplicate claims folder number, and
- handling missing or discrepant Beneficiary Identification and Records Locator Subsystem (BIRLS) and corporate records.

Change Date August 5, 2020

II.ii.1.A.1.a. Associating Records With a Claims Folder Number All records for claimants and beneficiaries that can be identified must be associated with a claims folder number and stored in the corresponding claims folder. There are two types of claims folder numbers used by the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) to establish the claims folder. The numbers are based on

- the Veteran's Social Security number (SSN), or
- an eight-digit claims folder number assigned through the Beneficiary Identification and Records Locator Subsystem (BIRLS).

Use the table below to determine the type of claims folder number to assign.

For original applications from …	The claims folder number is based on …
Veterans with an established SSN	the SSN.
• Philippine nationals, and • other Veterans without an established SSN	BIRLS assignment.

Important:

- All documents received by VBA with identifying personal information require association with a claims folder number regardless of the need for claims establishment or confirmation of Veteran status.
- To avoid duplicate claim (DUPC) processing, conduct a thorough search of all systems for a previously established claims folder number as outlined in **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 1.A.1.c**.

II.ii.1.A.1.b. How Claims Folders and Numbers Are Established

Veteran data is electronically sent from the Department of Defense to VBA and used to establish a corporate record for the individual. The establishment of the corporate record automatically creates the corresponding electronic claims folder (eFolder).

Historically, claims processors had to manually generate the claims folder number and paper claims folders via legacy applications used to establish claims, update system information, and track folders.

Reference: For more information on historical procedures for creating claims folders and numbers, see the attachments

- *Historical_M21-1III_ii_3_SecA_6-27-16*, and
- *Historical_M21-1III_ii_3_SecB_2-14-20*.

II.ii.1.A.1.c. Checking for a Previously Established or Duplicate Claims Folder Number

When processing mail or taking other claim actions, it may be necessary to determine if a claims folder had been previously established under another claims folder number and reconciliation of the records is needed.

The table below provides guidance on checking for the existence of a previously established or duplicate claims folder number.

Step	Action
1	Review the correspondence for the BIRLS-generated eight-digit number or an SSN used as a claims folder number. If a claims folder number • is *available*, use the SEARCH ALL IN LIST command in Share to pull up the claimant's data for review, or • is *not available*, attempt to locate the claimant in VBA systems using information from the correspondence and alternative data sources, including • Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) advanced profile search

	• Share BIRLS INQUIRY command • Share CORPORATE INQUIRY command • Participant Profile PERSON and NUMBERS searches in Share • Compensation and Pension Record Interchange (CAPRI) enterprise search, and • non-Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) sources, such as • CLEAR • Defense Finance and Accounting Service - Retired and Casualty Pay System, and • Federal On-line Query (FOLQ), which can be accessed through the SSA INQUIRY command in Share or VBMS. ***Note***: If the claims folder number cannot be obtained using alternative sources, go to Step 3.
2	Review the SEARCH ALL IN LIST results and verify that the claimant has both a BIRLS record and corporate record listed under the claims folder number. If • a BIRLS and corporate record both exist under the claims folder number, no further action in this table is necessary, or • a BIRLS or corporate record is missing, or the records exist under separate claims folder numbers (i.e. one under the eight-digit BIRLS number, the other using the claimant's SSN), follow the guidance in **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 1.A.1.d**. ***Note***: If the Veteran reports that their SSN has been changed, complete a search using the old SSN.
3	Contact the claimant using information provided on the correspondence or obtained via alternative data sources indicated in Step 1, and obtain the missing information required to validate the claims folder number, or if necessary, establish a new record. If the claimant cannot be reached, continue processing the • correspondence as unidentifiable mail, as instructed in **M21-1, Part II, Subpart i, 2.C.5**, or • claim under the assumption that there is not a previously established or duplicate claims folder that must be reconciled.

References: For more information on
- using Share search functions, see the ***Share Users Guide***
- CAPRI search functions, see the ***CAPRI User***

Manual, and
- advanced search features in VBMS, see the *VBMS Core User Guide*.

II.ii.1.A.1.d. Handling Missing or Discrepant BIRLS and Corporate Records

Use the table below to determine what steps to take when it is necessary to handle missing or discrepant BIRLS and corporate record data.

If ...	Then ...
a BIRLS record is missing	• follow the guidance in the ***Duplicate Record Consolidation Materials*** to prevent duplicate record creation and, if directed, • use the BIRLS ADD command in Share to create the BIRLS record. ***Note***: Review the ALL RELATIONSHIPS tab in the CORPORATE record – the claimant may have a corporate record as a dependent, who is now seeking benefits related to their own military service.
corporate record is missing	use the BIRLS UPDATE command in Share to create the corporate record. ***Notes***: • The minimum information required to create a corporate record includes the • SSN and/or eight-digit BIRLS claim number • first name • last name, and • date of birth. • If the minimum information required cannot be obtained via the alternative data sources or claimant contact discussed in **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 1.A.1.c**, Steps 1-3, process the correspondence as unidentifiable mail.
a BIRLS and corporate record both exist but under different claims folder numbers	follow the duplicate claim processing guidance in the ***Duplicate Record Consolidation Materials***.

2. Claims Folder Formats

Introduction

This topic contains information on the format of claims folders, including

- claims folder formats
- definition of
- an eFolder, and
- a paper claims folder
- eFolder locations
- end products (EPs) that require scanning of unconverted paper claims folders
- determining if a scanning request is necessary
- resolving claims folder format discrepancies, and
- claims folder related flashes.

Change Date March 17, 2025

II.ii.1.A.2.a. Claims Folder Formats

VBA has two formats for claims folders:
- eFolders, and
- paper claims folders.

While some paper claims folders still exist, all new claims folders are established in the electronic format unless explicitly stated as an exception.

II.ii.1.A.2.b. Definition: eFolder

An ***electronic claims folder*** (eFolder) is an electronic repository for scanned documents related to a single Veteran and associated with a claims folder number. VA maintains eFolders inVBMS.

References: For more information on
- VBMS eFolders, see the *VBMS Core User Guide*, and
- claims folder numbers, see M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 1.A.1.

II.ii.1.A.2.c. Definition: Paper Claims Folder

A ***paper claims folder*** is a repository for paper documents related to a single Veteran and associated with a claims folder number. VBA has two types of paper claims folders:
- claims folders, and
- notice of death folders.

Important:
- A paper claims folder that has been scanned and uploaded to an electronic record system (i.e. converted) is thereafter considered an eFolder, unless the folder in storage is explicitly referenced.
- Most paper claims folders not currently located at a Federal records center (FRC) are stored at a scanning facility and have already been converted to eFolders or are queued to be converted.

Reference: For more information on claims folder numbers, see M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 1.A.1.

II.ii.1.A.2.d. eFolder Locations

VBA uses the folder locations listed in the table below when a(n)
- paper claims folder is sent for scanning conversion, or
- eFolder is established and no paper claims folder previously existed.

Folder Location	Description
DCSC1	Converted and stored at CSRA Newnan, GA.
DCSC2	Converted and stored at CSRA Mt Vernon, KY.

DCSS1	Converted and stored at SMS Janesville, WI.
DCSS2	Converted by Records Management Center and stored at SMS Janesville, WI.
VBMSRT	Location for claim folders that exist only in VBMS.
INVBMS	Location for claims folders that were • established as eFolders, or • converted paper claims folders with discrepant folder location data that has been corrected.
EFILE	Location for claim folders that exist only in VBMS.
INVVA	Location for claim folders that exist in VBMS.
INPLCP	Location for claim folders that exist in VBMS.
NWXFR	Location for claim folders that exist in VBMS.
ICMHS	Location for claim folders that exist in VBMS.
SYS – NFE REASON	Location for claims folders that were established as eFolders by certain system functions or legacy application commands. Follow instructions for resolving claims folder format discrepancies in **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 1.A.2.g** when this location code is identified as the current claims folder location.

Important: Records involving claims folders scanned to the *SYS – NFE REASON* folder location are more likely to be associated with duplicate records. These claims folders must be carefully reviewed to determine if a duplicate record exists and then appropriate duplicate record remediation procedures must be followed.

References: For more information on

- resolving claims folder format discrepancies using the FOLDER LOCATION, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 1.A.2.g**, and
- duplicate record remediation, see
- ***Duplicate Record Consolidation Materials***, and
- **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 1.B.3**.

II.ii.1.A.2.e. EP Establishment Requiring Conversion of Existing Paper Claims Folders

Not all adjudication actions require scanning of unconverted paper claims folders. The following end products (EPs) and EP series listed below require conversion to an eFolder:

- 010 series
- 020 series
- 030 series
- 040 series
- 095
- 110 series
- 130 series
- 140 series
- 160 series
- 290
- 295
- 310
- 320 series
- 400
- 410 series

- 420 series
- 450 series
- 510
- 511
- 512
- 680 series, and
- 930.

Important: Do not request scanning of a paper claims folder if the EP is not listed above unless approved for scanning as a result of specific guidance issued by VA Central Office.

References: For more information on

- circumstances under which claims processors establish the EPs referenced in this block, see **M21-4, Appendix B**, and
- claim types that qualify for priority processing, see **M21-1, Part X, Subpart i, 1.1.a**.

II.ii.1.A.2.f. Determining if a Scanning Request Is Necessary

Upon establishment of an EP listed in **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 1.A.2.e**, identify the claims folder location and use the table below to determine if a scanning request is necessary.

If the folder location is ...	Then ...
an eFolder location shown in **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 1.A.2.d**	the folder has already been scanned/converted to an eFolder.
an FRC (e.g. 010, 060, or 080)	follow the guidance on requesting claims folders from FRCs in **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 3**.

Note: Review the information in **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 1.A.2.g**, if irregular or discrepant folder location history makes it difficult to determine if a scanning request is necessary.

Reference: For more information on identifying folder locations, see the *VBMS Core User Guide*.

II.ii.1.A.2.g. Resolving Claims Folder Format Discrepancies

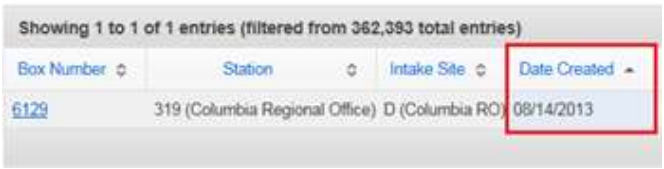
Claims folders that have been converted or only existed electronically may show a folder location not listed in **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 1.A.2.d**. Common scenarios creating this discrepancy include

- claims brokered to another regional office, and
- claims processors accidentally receiving claims to their paper claims folder location when using legacy folder tracking applications.

When a review of the folder location does not conclusively identify the format of the claims folder, use the VBMS INTAKE tab to research shipments of claims material to scanning vendors.

The table below outlines the process of verifying shipments to a scanning site using the INTAKE tab in VBMS.

Step	Action	
1	Use the HISTORY button on the FOLDER LOCATION tab in VBMS to determine the suspected shipment date of the claim folder(s) to a scanning site.	
2	Under the INTAKE tab in VBMS	

	• enter the claims folder number in the FILE NUMBER field • ensure the DATE SHIPPED and DATE CREATED fields are blank • set the INTAKE SITE field to *All Intake Sites* • match the STATION field in VBMS with the station listed in the STATION column of the CLAIMS FOLDER HISTORY screen in VBMS, and • filter for results. VBMS will display a list of each time an item was sent to scanning.	
3	Search the DATE CREATED column for a date corresponding with the DATE IN field in the CLAIMS FOLDER HISTORY screen. A match verifies shipment to a scanning facility. ***Example***: 	
4	Change the incorrect folder location to INVBMS to reflect its conversion to an eFolder and apply the *VBMS* corporate flash if it has not already been added.	

Notes:
- Verify all volumes were received into a scanning location. If necessary, repeat the process for all volumes.
- Historically, VBMS claim folders required transfers via legacy applications to give the receiving station jurisdiction over the brokered claim. Frequently, intake processing centers marked the folder received at locally-determined locations not listed in **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 1.A.2.d**. ***Reference***: For more information on the intake tab and claims folder information in VBMS, see the *VBMS Core User Guide*.

II.ii.1.A.2.h. Claims Folder Related Flashes Corporate flashes are used to indicate the claims folder format. A combination of two or more flashes is common. The table below provides descriptions of claims folder related flashes and when they should be applied.

Flash	Description
VBMS	• The presence of this flash is a strong indicator that the claim folder has either

	• already been electronically converted into a VBMS eFolder, or • is in route to a scanning facility. • This flash must be added when it has been confirmed that the paper claims folder has been converted.
No Paper Claim Folder	• This flash is added when • a claims folder is established after the implementation of VBMS, and • a paper claims folder never existed. • Definitively establishes that the entire claims folder is the VBMS eFolder.
PLCP	• The Paperless Claims Processing (PLCP) flash was used with pre-discharge programs to indicate no paper claims folder exists. • With the implementation of VBMS for pre-discharge claims, all content is now loaded into the VBMS eFolder and this flash is no longer applied.
Documents Exist in VBMS	When only this flash displays, it indicates that there are documents located in the VBMS eFolder. ***Note***: This flash does not always mean that the entire claims folder is in VBMS. It is possible even with this flash that the claims folder is still in paper format.

From <https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000174863/M21-1-Part-II-Subpart-ii-Chapter-1-Section-A-Establishing-New-and-Converting-Old-Claims-Folders>

M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, Chapter 1, Section B - Lost Paper Claims Folders and Reconciliation of Duplicate Records

Article ID: 554400000174864
Updated Aug 15, 2024

In This Section This section contains the following topics:

Topic	Topic Name
1	Searching for Lost Paper Claims Folders
2	Claims Folder Number Reconciliation and Cancellation

1. Searching for Lost Paper Claims Folders

Introduction This topic contains information on searching for lost paper claims folders, including

- general search procedure
- rebuilding lost
- paper claims folders, and
- notice of death (NOD) or Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA) folders, and
- combining folders when the original folder is located.

Change Date May 2, 2019

II.ii.1.B.1.a. General Search Procedure Make an exhaustive search of the entire office upon discovering that the paper claims folder of a living or deceased Veteran, a notice of death (NOD) folder, or Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA) folder is

- missing, or
- was sent to a vendor to be converted to an electronic record and the documents contained within the folder are unavailable.

Note: If the folder was

- sent to a vendor to be converted to an electronic record, follow the guidance in M21-1, Part II, Subpart i, 1.B.4 to locate the source materials and request a folder rescan, or
- located at the regional office (RO) and is now missing, follow the steps in the table below.

Step	Action
1	Conduct a name search of the entire drawer where the folder should be filed.
2	Add the claims folder number to the search list.
3	Check the • pending files of the transfer and correspondence activities, and • principal guardianship files.

4	If the computer system shows an active compensation, pension, or education record, check the records of recent payment history. If these records show payment of benefits by another RO, contact that RO to determine whether the folder is located there.
5	If completion of the preceding steps fails to result in locating the missing folder, consider the folder lost. ***Note***: The RO that has mail for the folder and is requesting the folder should report the folder missing, if applicable.
6	Maintain the pending end product (EP) with a 30-day suspense that begins on the date the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) received the claim. After the 30-day period ends, • create a rebuilt claims folder for processing the claim, and • continue any incomplete search efforts to find the original folder.

II.ii.1.B.1.b. Rebuilding Lost Paper Claims Folders

Follow the steps in the table below if the missing folder is a paper claims folder.

Step	Action
1	Submit a scanning request via the **Source Material Tracking System (SMTS) Portal**. Consider the following message a negative response for records: *File not found*. Save a screenshot of the message for association with the claims folder. ***References***: For more information on • the SMTS Portal, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart i, 1.B.5**, and • using the SMTS Portal to request a folder, see the ***SMTS Training Manual***.
2	Request a physical check for the claims folder in the file bank by • sending an e-mail message to the Veterans Service Center Manager of any RO where there is reason to believe the folder may be located, and • requesting a response within a specific period of time. ***Note***: For claims that require priority processing, request a response time of 24 hours. For routine requests, request a response time of five workdays. ***Reference***: For more information on claims that require priority processing, see **M21-1, Part X, Subpart i, 1**.
3	Upon receipt of negative replies from all locations, rebuild the claims folder according to the instructions in the table below.

If the rebuilt claims folder will be in a(n) ...	Then ...
electronic	• create an electronic claims folder

	format	(eFolder) in the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS), if one does not already exist • upload the negative responses to the eFolder • request from the claimant copies of any relevant evidence or documentation in their possession and, if applicable, the possession of their power of attorney (POA) • update the Beneficiary Identification and Records Locator Subsystem (BIRLS) FOLDER LOCATION screen to reflect that the eFolder at the RO is a rebuilt eFolder, and • append the *Rebuilt Folder* corporate flash. ***References***: For more information on • creating eFolders, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 1.A** • appending a corporate flash, see the ***Share User Guide***, and • updating BIRLS to show a rebuilt folder, see the ***Share User Guide***.
	paper format	• prepare a rebuilt folder • associate the negative responses with the paper claims folder • request from the claimant copies of any relevant evidence or documentation in their possession and, if applicable, the possession of their POA • update the BIRLS FOLDER LOCATION screen to reflect that the folder at the RO is a rebuilt folder, and • prominently mark the cover of the rebuilt folder with the words *Rebuilt Folder*.

II.ii.1.B.1.c. Rebuilding Lost NOD or DEA Folders

Use the table below if a NOD or a DEA folder cannot be located after

- completing internal searches, and
- receiving responses to requests for searches at any other ROs where the folder might be located.

If the rebuilt NOD or DEA folder will be in a(n) ...	Then ...
electronic format	• create an eFolder • upload the negative responses to the eFolder, and • append the *Rebuilt Folder* corporate flash. ***References***: For more information on • eFolder creation, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 1.A**, and

	• appending a corporate flash, see • the ***Share User Guide***, and • *VBMS Core User Guide*.
paper format	• rebuild the folder • associate the negative responses with the paper claims folder • if necessary, include copies of documents from available claims folders, fiscal records, and education records in the DEA folder, and • prominently mark the cover of the rebuilt folder with the words *Rebuilt Folder*.

II.ii.1.B.1.d. Combining Folders When the Original Folder Is Located

Use the table below to determine the appropriate actions to take after locating a lost paper claims folder.

If the rebuilt folder is in a(n) ...	Then ...
electronic format	• consolidate documents that were obtained from the original folder into the rebuilt eFolder by sending the paper claims folder to the scanning vendor • remove the rebuilt folder indicator in BIRLS, and • remove the *Rebuilt Folder* corporate flash.
paper format	• combine the rebuilt folder and the original folder • remove the rebuilt folder indicator in BIRLS, and • forward the folder to the controlling operational element for review.

References: For more information on
- sending a claims folder to the scanning vendor, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart i, 1.B**
- removing a corporate flash, see the ***Share User Guide***, and
- updating BIRLS to remove the rebuilt folder indicator, see the ***Share User Guide***.

2. Claims Folder Number Reconciliation and Cancellation

Introduction

This topic contains information on claims folder number reconciliation and cancellation, including
- **requirements for consolidation of duplicate BIRLS records and claims folders**
- **RO action when two BIRLS records exist for the same Veteran**, and
- **preparing the records for consolidation by Compensation**

Service.

Change Date August 15, 2024

II.ii.1.B.2.a. Requirements for Consolidation of Duplicate BIRLS Records and Claims Folders

The RO that is performing the consolidation must have custody and jurisdiction of both corresponding claims folders to consolidate the duplicate BIRLS records.

If the RO not have custody of, or hold jurisdiction over, the claims folder(s)/eFolder(s) involved, that RO must request a permanent transfer of the absent claim folder/eFolder.

Exception: A permanent transfer of the physical claims folder should only be conducted when the folder is located at a Federal records center (FRC).
Use the table below to determine the RO responsible for performing consolidation.

If the duplicate record was created by …	and discovered by …	Then remediation steps must be taken by the RO…
a specific RO	any RO or VA Central Office (VACO)	that created the duplicate record.
VBA automation functionality	an RO	that discovered the duplicate record.
	VACO	nearest to the Veteran's residence.

Reference: For more information on requesting a claims folder from an FRC, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 3**.

II.ii.1.B.2.b. RO Action When Two BIRLS Records Exist for the Same Veteran

After discovering that two BIRLS records exist for the same Veteran, forward all corresponding documentation, including claims folders and applications, if applicable, to the local intake processing center (IPC).

The IPC is responsible for consolidating the records. This is accomplished by using the duplicate claim (DUPC) command, which users access through the Benefits Delivery Network (BDN).
Exceptions:

- Do *not* forward finance activity records to the IPC.
- Compensation Service will perform the consolidation if the claims folder is located at folder location 376 or 101-ICMHS. The IPC is responsible for preparing the records for consolidation, following the instructions in **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 1.B.2.c**.

Reference: For more information about using the DUPC command, see the ***BDN DUPC Job Aid***.

II.ii.1.B.2.c. Preparing the Records for Consolidation by Compensation Service

Approved IPC designees are responsible for following the steps in the table below when one or more of the claims folders are located at folder location 376 or 101-ICMHS.

Step	Action
1	Request expedited scanning of the claims folder using the **SMTS Portal**, if necessary.

2	Add to each pending EP associated with the duplicate BIRLS records, the • *Duplicate Record Consolidation (DUPC)* special issue indicator to one contention, and • *File Requested* tracked item.
3	Submit a Service Now (SNOW) ticket via the YourIT Service Portal requesting record consolidation. The • ticket's short description must say *BDN DUPC Correction*, and • attachment to the ticket should specifically identify which file number/Social Security number is to be • retained, and • merged or removed.
4	For claim types managed by the National Work Queue (NWQ), e-mail the NWQ staff at **VAVBAWAS/CO/NWQ** to request transfer of any pending EPs associated with the duplicate records to the Central Office VBMS work queue. The e-mail's • subject line must say *Station **[insert station number]**_**[insert today's date]**_DUPC Recall Request*, and • body must contain • clearly identified Claim IDs of the claim(s) impacted by the duplicate record consolidation, and • the active YourIT ticket number for the DUPC issue.
5	Associate a copy of the e-mail to NWQ with the claims folder.

Notes:

- Compensation Service will complete the DUPC record consolidation and the approved IPC designee will remove the special issue indicator upon completion of the consolidation.
- NWQ will review requests to determine recall eligibility. The recalled claim(s) will be routed to the appropriate station by NWQ once the special issue indicator has been removed.

References: For more information on

- duplicate record consolidation, see the ***Duplicate Records Consolidation Materials***
- performing the duplicate claim command, see the ***BDN DUPC Job Aid***
- the SMTS Portal, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart i, 1.B.5**
- using the SMTS Portal to request a folder, see the ***SMTS Training Manual***, and
- adding special issue indicators and tracked items, see the *VBMS Core User Guide*.

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M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, Chapter 2, Section A - Folder Maintenance

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Topics
M21-1 Adjudication Procedures Manual >
Part 02 (Part II). Intake, Claims Establishment, Jurisdiction, and File Maintenance >
Subpart ii. Claims Folder Establishment, Maintenance, Jurisdiction, and Transfer >
Chapter 02. Claims Folder Maintenance

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Overview

In This Section This section contains the following topics:

Topic	Topic Name
1	Maintenance for Electronic Claims Folders (eFolders)
2	Handling Documents That Are Misfiled or Require Amendment and/or Deletion
3	Missing Claims Materials That Were Previously of Record
4	Claims Materials That Are Misplaced in the Centralized Mail (CM) System
5	Claims Materials Submitted Using a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Electronic Application Process That Fails to Upload to the eFolder

1. Maintenance for eFolders

Introduction This topic contains information to assist Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) end users with maintaining an eFolder in VBMS, including

- VBMS new mail indicator
- converting documents to portable document format (PDF) and uploading to the eFolder
- associating an eFolder note
- indexing a document in VBMS
- using the document's subject as a note
- manually removing the banner that indicates documents are pending scanning
- redacting eFolder documents containing criminal investigation reports, and
- other VBMS functionality available to maintain the eFolder.

Change Date July 17, 2019

II.ii.2.A.1.a. VBMS When new evidence or correspondence is uploaded into a claimant's electronic claims folder (eFolder), an icon representing a new envelope will appear in the NEW MAIL column of the work queue and eFolder.

New Mail Indicator

This icon, hereafter referred to as the "new mail indicator," should be cleared on all documents upon completion of initial development. All subsequent new documents should be opened and reviewed for relevant information. This action should be completed by any employee handling the eFolder.

Example:

Note: The new mail indicator may be cleared on multiple documents by first selecting each document and choosing the *Mark as Open* option in the ACTIONS drop-down menu.

Reference: For more information on the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) new mail indicator, see the *VBMS Core User Guide*.

II.ii.2.A.1.b. Converting Documents to PDF and Uploading to the eFolder

When a document is generated or received outside of VBMS it must be converted into a portable document format (PDF), if it is not already in this format, and uploaded into the eFolder.

Use the table below to convert and upload a PDF.

If the document was created in ...	Then ...
Microsoft Word	• complete all necessary development actions and letter adjustments normally made prior to finalization • review the letter for accuracy • finalize the letter with a visible seal when applicable • set the default printer to *Adobe PDF*, if available • save the letter as a PDF to the desktop, and • upload the document. ***Note***: Upon successful upload, delete the PDF from the desktop.
Microsoft Outlook (e-mail)	• open the e-mail • click the FILE tab • save the e-mail as a PDF to the desktop, and • upload the document. ***Note***: Upon successful upload, delete the PDF from the desktop.
another program outside of VBMS	• create a PDF by • opening the document in Adobe Acrobat Pro and saving it as a PDF, or • printing to *Adobe PDF*, and • upload the document.

Important:

- To prevent file name conflicts, save the PDF document with a unique filename by using the
- claimant's initials,
- type of document, and
- date of upload.
- If a file name conflict occurs, choose the KEEP BOTH, REPLACE EXISTING or CANCEL UPLOAD button that appears in the prompt box, as applicable.

Example: A *Hypertension Disability Benefits Questionnaire* (DBQ) for Jamie Veteran, uploaded on October 7, 2017, could be named *jvHTN100717.pdf*.

Notes:
- Converting Microsoft Word documents and e-mails to PDF for upload to the eFolder reduces the processing delays associated with printing and shipping a paper copy to the scanning vendor.
- Claims processors must use Adobe Acrobat Pro to do a single-step PDF conversion; Microsoft OneNote should only be used when Adobe Acrobat Pro is unavailable.
- Legacy appeal-related documents must include an appropriate, secondary category type label. Secondary category type labels are available under the CATEGORY - TYPE: ALTERNATE field.

References: For more information on

- uploading eFolder documents, see the *VBMS Core User Guide*
- handling misfiled documents, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.A.2.a**, and
- requesting document deletion, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.A.2.b**.

II.ii.2.A.1.c. Associating an eFolder Note

To document information or recent actions taken on a claim, users may add a note from any screen in VBMS that displays the ADD NOTE icon. Associating a note to a Veteran or claim determines whether or not the note will be temporary or permanent. A note associated to a Veteran is always permanent, and claim-associated notes can be temporary or permanent.

Notes can be added and viewed to document information or recent actions taken on a claim. Notes should reflect actions that are not captured by a tracked item or development letter.

Examples: Notes can be used to document
- unsuccessful attempts to contact the Veteran, or
- the reason for postponement of a routine future exam.

A permanent, claim-associated note in VBMS is ***required*** to document
- the rationale for changing the date of claim (DOC) of an end product (EP)
- an explanation for
- establishing an EP 930, and
- cancelling an EP 930, and
- the details of an EP 930 or quality review error correction, which must include the
- specific corrective action(s) taken
- date of the action(s) taken, and
- station number of the regional office (RO) that took the action(s).

Note: Any VBMS user can view permanent notes associated to a Veteran's claim; however, temporary notes associated to a specific claim are deleted when the claim is closed or

completed. Depending on access rights, only the original creator of the note, the user assigned to the claim, and persons with supervisor or administrator roles can view temporary notes.

Important: Do not type anything in a note that would be seen as inappropriate or offensive by the Veteran, the general public, or the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. State the facts only, not opinions. Permanent notes become part of the Veteran's record at midnight on the day the note was created and are subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Reference: For more information on associating an eFolder document note to a claim, see the *VBMS Core User Guide.*

II.ii.2.A.1.d. Indexing a Document in VBMS

When uploading a document into an eFolder, index the document in accordance with the ***Document Identification and Date of Receipt Guide***.

Important:

- DBQs that are completed by Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or non-VA health care providers outside the Compensation & Pension examination process and submitted by the claimant must be indexed as *Disability Benefits Questionnaire (DBQ) – Veteran Provided*.
- Legacy appeal-related documents have secondary category type labels that can be affixed under the CATEGORY - TYPE: ALTERNATE field, with the following options:
- *Notice of Disagreement (NOD)*
- *Statement of the Case (SOC)*
- *Substantive Appeal to Board of Veteran's Appeals*, and
- *Supplemental Statement of the Case (SSOC)*.

Note: Documents of an *Unknown* type must be relabeled. If a category and type cannot be determined, use the subject line to briefly describe the document.

References: For more information on how to

- properly label a document, see the ***Document Identification and Date of Receipt Guide***, and
- edit document properties in VBMS, see the *VBMS Core User Guide*.

II.ii.2.A.1.e. Using the Document's Subject as a Note

To aid in easy identification of document(s) commonly used when processing a claim, use the document's subject line as a note field. This allows for easy identification of important documents when viewing the entire eFolder under the DOCUMENTS tab in VBMS.

The table below provides the subject lines for several common documents.

Evidence	Document Category	Subject
• ***VA Form 21-22, Appointment of Veterans Service Organization as Claimant's Representative***, or • ***VA Form 21-22a, Appointment of Individual as***	*Representation*	• name of the power of attorney (abbreviated, if an abbreviation for the name exists), and • *Revoked* (if applicable)

Claimant's Representative		
Records Management Center (RMC) e-mails	*Service Personnel Records*	• *RMC request*, or • *RMC response*
• Personnel Information Exchange System (PIES) request, or • PIES response	*Service Personnel Records*	PIES request code, and • *request*, or • *response*. ***Reference***: For more information on PIES request codes, see the ***PIES User Guide***.

Reference: For more information on changing the subject line for a VBMS document, see the *VBMS Core User Guide*.

II.ii.2.A.1.f. Manually Removing the Banner That Indicates Documents Are Pending Scanning

A banner indicating documents are pending scanning appears when an RO creates a *Document Control Sheet* (DCS) and ships material to a scanning vendor. On rare occasions, the banner will remain visible after the material has been scanned and uploaded to the eFolder.

Follow the instructions in the *VBMS Core User Guide* to close the pending scanning status. Leave a permanent, claim-level note providing justification for the action taken.

References: For more information on
- setting the pending scanning status, see the *VBMS Core User Guide*, and
- reviewing DCSs, see the *VBMS Core User Guide*.

II.ii.2.A.1.g. Redacting eFolder Documents Containing Criminal Investigation Reports

Documents in the eFolder containing criminal investigation reports must be replaced with a redacted copy. To properly redact eFolder documents,
- download a copy of each document containing criminal investigation reports
- redact all personally identifiable information (PII) not pertaining to the Veteran
- upload each redacted copy using the same category type, source, and date of receipt as the original document. The subject line should read *Redacted copy of original document*, and
- request deletion of the original, un-redacted document(s). The claims processor must leave a note explaining the action taken. Use the table below to determine the content of the note and who is responsible for leaving it.

If the claims processor is ...	**Then a note must be left that ...**
submitting a *Document Error Report* to the RO mailbox for a PDF editor to redact the document	• indicates the user has e-mailed a request to redact the document to the station's established mailbox, and • provides the address of the mailbox.

submitting a redaction request to an employee who *is not* a PDF editor but is authorized by the RO to amend documents in the eFolder	• indicates the user has e-mailed a request to redact the document, and • identifies the individual to whom the request was sent.
• authorized by RO management to amend documents in the eFolder, and • personally performing the redaction	indicates • the document was successfully redacted and placed in the claims folder, and • a request to delete the un-redacted document has been submitted.

Note: If the subject line of the document must contain other required language, use annotations to identify the uploaded document as a redacted copy of the original.

References: For more information on
- using annotations, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.A.1.h**
- electronic document redaction, see the **instructions for redacting sensitive content** on Adobe's website, and
- requesting deletion of a document, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.A.2.b-d**.

II.ii.2.A.1.h. Other VBMS Functionality Available to Maintain the eFolder

VBMS-Core contains a variety of tools and functionality that allow a claims processor to organize and maintain the eFolder. Use of these features are strongly recommended, but may also be required by individual manual references and other guidance.

The *VBMS Core User Guide* contains instructions on how to use features such as
- associating documents to a specific claim
- bookmarking an eFolder document
- annotating a document
- tagging a document with no legal, administrative, or historical value for a claim as having no evidentiary value, and
- managing duplicate copies of the same document and designating best copy, certified copy, or establishing effective date.
  Note: When annotating an award for record-keeping purposes, enter information into the remarks section of the document that briefly provides the reasons for the required action.

References: For more information on
- adding bookmarks and associating documents to a claim, see the *VBMS Core User Guide*
- adding remarks to an award, see the *VBMS Awards User Guide*
- the material that requires removal from a claims folder, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.B**, and
- managing duplicate documents, see the *VBMS Core User Guide*.

2. Handling Documents That Are Misfiled or Require Amendment and/or Deletion

Introduction

This topic contains information to assist VBMS end users with maintaining an eFolder in VBMS, including

- handling a misfiled electronic document identified in VBMS
- requesting a document deletion in VBMS
- validating the request for document deletion
- preparing a document for deletion by the VBMS Office of Information Technology (OIT)
- establishing a local mailbox for document error report submissions
- eFolder document amendment
- removing an incorrectly scanned document
- merging documents in VBMS, and
- splitting documents in VBMS.

Change Date July 26, 2024

II.ii.2.A.2.a. Handling a Misfiled Electronic Document Identified in VBMS

Upon identification of a misfiled document in VBMS, take action to relocate the document to the correct claims folder.

Use the table below when handling a misfiled electronic document identified in VBMS.

If misfiled document belongs to a …	And …	Then transfer the document to the appropriate location by ...
different eFolder in VBMS	*no* action is required	• selecting the DOCUMENTS link • clicking the checkbox for the document that is being moved • clicking ACTIONS • selecting *Move* from the drop-down menu • entering the file number in the MOVE DOCUMENT(S) prompt box • clicking LOOKUP to view all possible matches • clicking MOVE DOCUMENT(S) to move the document into the correct eFolder (a confirmation banner should appear), and • clicking RETURN to go back to the DOCUMENTS screen. ***Note***: The claim processor can move more than one

		document, if necessary.
	action is required	• establishing EP control, if necessary • selecting the DOCUMENTS link • clicking the checkbox for the document that is being moved. • clicking ACTIONS • selecting *Move* from the drop-down menu • entering the file number in the MOVE DOCUMENT(S) prompt box • clicking LOOKUP to view all possible matches • clicking MOVE DOCUMENT(S) to move the document into the correct eFolder (a confirmation banner should appear), and • taking appropriate action to address the misfiled document. ***Reference***: For more information on handling incoming mail, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart i, 2.C.2**.
a paper claims folder	*no* action is required	• printing the document • placing a routing slip on the document and routing the document to the claims folder for proper filing, and • requesting document deletion per the procedures in **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.A.2.b-d**.
	action is required	• establishing EP control, if necessary • printing the document • placing a routing slip on the document and routing it to the correct claims folder for proper filing • adding a note indicating the type of document being routed to the paper claims folder • taking appropriate action to address the misfiled document, and • requesting document deletion per the procedures in **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.A.2.b-d**. ***Reference***: For more information on handling incoming mail, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart i, 2.C.2**.

Note: The RO must notify the Privacy Officer when

misfiled documents are released during a FOIA request.

References: For more information on how to
- move an eFolder document in VBMS, see the *VBMS Core User Guide*, and
- handle a misfiled sensitive document, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.B**.

II.ii.2.A.2.b. Requesting a Document Deletion in VBMS

Once a document is finalized in VBMS it cannot be deleted without requesting assistance from the VBMS Office of Information Technology (OIT). There are several reasons a document may need to be removed from the eFolder. This includes when a document was
- incorrectly finalized (but not sent), and
- incorrectly uploaded and contains PII that violates the *Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Privacy and Information Security Awareness and Rules of Behavior*.

Follow the steps in the table below when requesting deletion of a document from an eFolder in VBMS.

Step	Action
1	Open the document to be deleted.
2	Click the DOCUMENT PROPERTIES button in the top left corner of the document window to display the EDITABLE PROPERTIES fields.
3	Enter *Review for Deletion* into the SUBJECT field and save the changes.
4	Save a copy of the ***VBMS Request for Document Deletion Form*** to the desktop and complete the following sections of the form: • *Reporting User* • *Priority* • *Reason* • *Veteran Information*, and • *Document Information*.
5	Select *Priority* from the drop-down box when a document contains PII that constitutes a violation of the VA Privacy Act, and *Normal* for all other document types. Save the changes. ***Note***: Use of the *Priority* status is also appropriate for other document types, such as • incorrect rating decisions that are finalized, and • documents that require removal from the eFolder, so the document cannot be viewed by • a beneficiary or claimant • a Veterans service organization, or • other parties with access to the eFolder.
6	• Send the ***VBMS Request for Document Deletion Form*** to a supervisor via encrypted e-mail with *Review for Document Deletion Needed* in the subject line, and • delete the copy of the form from the desktop.

Note: Duplicate copies of medical records, exam worksheets, and ***VA Form 27-0820, Report of General Information***, should not be deleted from an eFolder.

Exception: When the document requiring deletion contains Federal tax information, follow the guidance in **M21-1, Part XIV, 4.B.2.d**.

Reference: For more information on managing a duplicate document, see

- **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.A.1.g**, and
- *VBMS Core User Guide*.

II.ii.2.A.2.c. Validating the Request for Document Deletion

To validate the request for document deletion, an approving official must authorize the deletion of any document that is associated with an eFolder in VBMS.

The approving official must follow the steps in the table below when a ***VBMS Request for Document Deletion Form*** is received.

Step	Action
1	Open the e-mail with the subject line *Review for Document Deletion Needed*.
2	Open the ***VBMS Request for Document Deletion Form***.
3	Login to VBMS and navigate to the corresponding eFolder.
4	Open the document identified in the subject line as *Review for Deletion*.
5	Use the table below after • reviewing the form for accuracy, and • determining if the request is valid.

If document deletion is ...	Then ...
not necessary	• provide notice to the VBMS end user via e-mail, briefly describing the reason the request was not approved, and • remove the *Review for Deletion* subject line from the document properties of the document in question.
necessary	• complete the *Approving Official* section of the form, and • electronically sign the document.

II.ii.2.A.2.d. Preparing a Document for Deletion by VBMS OIT

The supervisor who approves the document deletion request from a claims processor must

- change the document subject line to *Approved for Deletion*, and
- transfer the document to the *Unassociated Documents* queue.

Important: VBMS OIT will periodically run a report on the *Unassociated Documents* queue to locate and remove the documents that have been identified for deletion. For this reason, supervisors must use the specific subject line

identified in this block.

Notes:
- VBMS OIT may contact the supervisor if additional information is needed before processing the request.
- Each ***VBMS Request for Document Deletion Form*** should be saved electronically in a central location at each RO, for use as
- reference material when answering questions from VBMS OIT, and
- a record of how the document deletion decision was made.

Reference: For more information on editing a document's subject line, see the *VBMS Core User Guide*.

II.ii.2.A.2.e. Establishing a Local Mailbox for Document Error Report Submissions

All ROs, the Board of Veterans' Appeals, and decision review operations centers must each designate, at minimum, five PDF editors to receive and complete station requests to amend documents in the VBMS eFolder. The editors must have Adobe Pro installed on their computers to perform the necessary edits.

Each RO must have a centralized mailbox for VBMS end users to submit a *Document Error Report* to the designated PDF editors. Follow the steps in the table below when establishing a local mailbox for *Document Error Report* submissions.

Step	Action
1	Send an e-mail to the RO Information Technology (IT) staff and include the request for establishment of a corporate mailbox. ***Important***: The IT staff should use the same naming convention when establishing the corporate mailbox. ***Example***: DocErrCorr.VBAXXX@va.gov (VAVBAXXX/RO/DOCERRCORR) where XXX is the three-letter code for the RO (such as ALB, BUF, BOS, DET.)).
2	Complete a local area network (LAN) form for each designated PDF editor.
3	Send the RO IT Staff an updated LAN form for each person who requires access to the corporate mailbox.
4	Notify the local Information Security Officer of the mailbox email address and request Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) encryption.
5	Designated PDF editors must add the corporate mailbox and install PKI certificates.

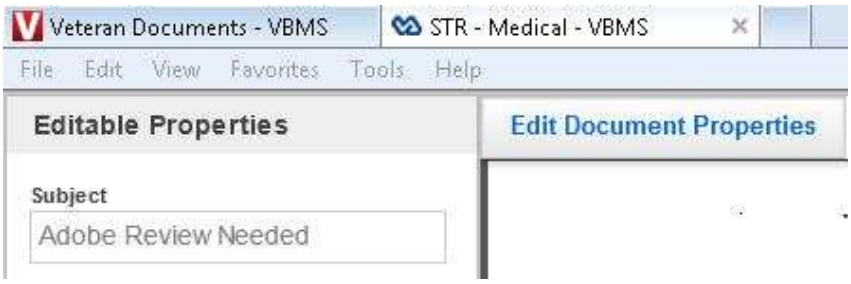
Note: PDF editors must be assigned a terminal digit (TD) range to receive and complete the requests to amend documents in the VBMS eFolder (such as User 1 – TD 00-19, User 2 – TD 20-39, and so forth).

II.ii.2.A.2.f. eFolder

VBMS end users must follow the steps in the table below after discovering an eFolder maintenance issue that requires the
- removal of a specific page from a document

Document Amendment

- splitting of a misfiled document, and/or
- merging of multiple documents into a single document.

Step	Action
1	Open the document at issue and click the EDIT DOCUMENT PROPERTIES button in the top left corner. ***Example***:
2	Add *Adobe Review Needed* to the document's subject line. ***Example***: 
3	Save changes.
4	Save a copy of the *Document Error Report* template to the desktop. ***Example***: **DOCUMENT ERROR REPORT** **Claim Number** **Last Name of Veteran** **Document Type** **Document Receipt Date** **Document ID** **Summary of Requested Changes**
5	Complete all applicable fields of the *Document Error Report*.
6	Attach the completed *Document Error Report* to an e-mail.
7	Insert the *Document Error Report* and claims folder TD in the e-mail subject line. ***Example***: *Document Error Report – TD 49*. ***Important***: Do ***not*** include the entire file number in the subject line.
8	Submit the e-mail to the local mailbox designated for the PDF editors.

Important: At the discretion of RO management, claims processors with Adobe Pro may be authorized to take the necessary corrective actions without requiring the submission of a *Document Error Report* to the local RO mailbox.

II.ii.2.A.2.g. Removing an Incorrectly

PDF editors, or claims processors given the authority to perform the corrective actions, will determine if an incorrectly scanned document needs to be removed from the

Scanned Document

eFolder. This action will be taken once the claim processor has completed the ***VBMS Request for Document Deletion Form*** and e-mailed the form to the specified mailbox.

Notes:
- The document must be moved to the *Unassociated Documents* queue in VBMS while awating approval.
- PDF editors are responsible for accessing and clearing out pending *Document Error Reports* on a weekly basis. ***Reference***: For more information on working with unassociated documents, see the *VBMS Core User Guide*.

II.ii.2.A.2.h. Merging Documents in VBMS

PDF editors, or users with Adobe Pro who have been given permission by RO management to make the required changes, must follow the steps in the table below when merging multiple eFolder documents into a single merged document.

Step	Action
1	With Adobe Acrobat Pro, select FILE CREATE to combine files into a single PDF.
2	Click ADD FILES and select the files that require merging.
3	Click DRAG AND DROP to reorder the files and pages.
4	Double-click on a file to expand and rearrange individual pages.
5	Press the Delete key (on the keyboard) to remove unwanted content.
6	After arranging the files, click COMBINE FILES.
7	Save the document as a PDF.
8	Name the PDF file and click SAVE.
9	Proceed to uploading the corrected documents to the eFolder.

Reference: For more information on the responsibilities of PDF editors, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.A.2.g**.

II.ii.2.A.2.i. Splitting Documents in VBMS

PDF editors, or users with Adobe Pro who have been given permission by RO management to make the required changes, must follow the steps in the table below when splitting a document into multiple eFolder documents.

Step	Action
1	Locate and open the document marked *Adobe Review Needed*.
2	Move the cursor over the PDF menu bar located at the bottom of the screen.
3	Select the Adobe symbol on the right-hand side of the menu.
4	A menu bar will appear at the top of the document. Click the SAVE icon on the left.
5	Save the PDF to the desktop with a file name that includes the document type and date. ***Important***: Delete this file upon completion of the

	document split.
6	Open the document and select the PAGE THUMBNAILS icon in the upper left-hand corner of the Navigation Panel and adjust the view to the user preference.
7	Select the page(s) that need(s) to be removed or split out of the document. ***Note***: Select a sequential range of pages by • clicking the first page • holding down the Shift key (on the keyboard), and • selecting the last page.
8	Right click and choose EXTRACT PAGES.
9	Check the option box for DELETE PAGES AFTER EXTRACTING.
10	Confirm deletion of the page(s) that is(are) marked for extraction.
11	The page(s) that was(were) chosen for extraction will appear in a new PDF file.
12	Save the new document to the desktop according to the document type and date.
13	Save the original document to the desktop that no longer includes the extracted documents.
14	Upload the corrected documents to the eFolder.
15	Delete the documents saved to the desktop as part of the document split.

Reference: For more information on the responsibilities of PDF editors, see M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.A.2.g.

3. Missing Claims Materials That Were Previously of Record

Introduction This topic describes the actions to take when claims materials that were previously of record go missing, including

- identifying missing claims materials that were previously of record, and
- replacing missing claims materials that were previously of record.

Change Date November 21, 2024

II.ii.2.A.3.a. Identifying Missing Claims Materials That Were Previously of Record In some situations, there may be indications that claims materials were previously of record and viewed by RO personnel. Identify lost claims of this type through review of claim notes and other identifiers in the corporate record.
Consider a claim lost if there is an electronic record of a pending claim but the claims folder contains no

documents related to the claim.

References: For more information on

- lost NODs, see **M21-5, Chapter 6, Section B, 5**
- handling allegations that claims materials were misplaced in the Centralized Mail (CM) system, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.A.4**, and
- claims submitted through VA claims submission service websites that are not properly transmitted to the eFolder, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.A.5**.

II.ii.2.A.3.b. Replacing Missing Claims Materials That Were Previously of Record

Follow the steps in the table below upon identification of missing claims materials that RO personnel may have previously viewed.

Step	Action
1	Ask any employee having knowledge of the facts surrounding the claim, including the date VA received it, to prepare a *signed* memorandum for the file containing this and any other relevant information for retention in the claims folder. ***Note***: The "employee" referenced in this step would include the employee responsible for creating the electronic record referenced in **M21-1, Part II, Subpart iii, 3.A**. It might also include any employee who has taken action on the claim and remembers relevant details about it.
2	Ask the employee's supervisor to sign the memorandum.
3	Determine what claimed issues the pending EP is being used to control. **If the EP is ...** / **Then ...** only controlling issues for the lost claim → change the controlling EP to an EP 400, *Correspondence*. controlling additional claimed issues → • continue processing the additional issues, and • address the lost claim under the currently pending EP.
4	Send the claimant the *Lost Claim Letter*. ***Note***: The letter should • inform the claimant that the claim was lost • request that the claimant submit another application as evidence of the • intent to file a claim, and • scope of the claim • request that the claimant resubmit any evidence previously submitted with the claim, and • notify the claimant that if the requested evidence is not furnished within one year after the date of the letter, the claim may be considered abandoned under the provisions of **38 CFR 3.158**.
5	Clear the EP 400, if one was established, after sending the letter.

Note: If, within one year of the date of the letter referenced in Step 4, a claimant resubmits a claim that VA lost, use the date of receipt of the *initial* (lost) claim as the DOC when reestablishing EP control. Otherwise, use the date of receipt of the *resubmitted* claim.

4. Claims Materials That Are Misplaced in the CM System

Introduction This topic contains information on allegations from claimants or their representatives of lost claims associated with the CM system, including

- **fax confirmation page the CM scanning vendor provided to claimants**, and
- resubmission of
- **a lost claim with copy of the fax confirmation page**, and
- **alleged lost claims absent the VA date-stamped fax confirmation page**.

Change Date November 30, 2020

II.ii.2.A.4.a. Fax Confirmation Page the CM Scanning Vendor Provided to Claimants

The scanning vendor provided a single confirmation page to claimants when the vendor received documents via the designated intake fax number.

The confirmation page

- was faxed back to the claimant's fax number, and
- consisted of a VA date-stamped copy of the *first* page of the claimant's fax transmission. ***Note***: The first page of a claimant's fax transmission was *generally*, but *not* necessarily, a cover sheet.

Reference: For more information on the intake fax number for the CM scanning vendor, see the VA ***Mailing Address for Disability Compensation Claims*** webpage.

II.ii.2.A.4.b. Resubmission of a Lost Claim With Copy of the Fax Confirmation Page

Claimants may resubmit a lost claim, but the claim ***must*** be accompanied by a copy of the original fax confirmation page referenced in **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.A.4.a**.

To retain the original DOC, the following ***must*** be provided *in addition to* a copy of the original fax confirmation page:

- statement from the claimant or the appointed representative attesting to timely filing of the original documents, and
- copies of ***all*** the originally faxed documents that ***match*** the page count from the original fax confirmation page.
  Example: If the confirmation page shows 10 pages

received, including the cover sheet, more than 9 pages of resubmitted documents will ***not*** be accepted as eligible to receive the original VA date stamp provided by the CM vendor.

Reference: For more information on the confirmation page provided to claimants by CM vendors, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.A.4.a**.

II.ii.2.A.4.c. Resubmission of Alleged Lost Claims Absent the VA Date-Stamped Fax Confirmation Page

If a CM vendor fax confirmation page with a VA date stamp is ***not*** provided by the claimant alleging a lost claim, then the original DOC associated with the alleged lost claim ***cannot*** be accepted.

References: For more information on the

- confirmation page provided by the CM vendor, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.A.4.a**, and
- resubmittal of a lost claim with a copy of the confirmation page, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.A.4.b**.

5. Claims Materials Submitted Using a VA Electronic Application Process That Fails to Upload to the eFolder

Introduction This topic contains information on locating missing claims documents submitted using a VA electronic application process, including

- **identifying claims submitted using a VA electronic application process that failed to upload to the eFolder**
- **allowing time for automatic retransmission of documents that failed to upload**
- **requesting retransmission of claims documents that failed to upload**, and
- **notifying a Veterans service organization (VSO) that claims documents submitted through Digits-2-Digits (D2D) failed to upload**.

Change Date February 5, 2021

II.ii.2.A.5.a. Identifying Claims Submitted Using a VA Electronic Application Process That Failed to Upload to the eFolder

In rare situations, a technical error in the Enterprise Veterans Self Service (EVSS) system, which supports electronic transmission of claims material through VA claims submission service websites, results in the failure of a claims document to upload to the eFolder. These cases can be identified by

- an automatically established EP
- an eBenefits claim label, and
- the absence of claims documents for the current claim in the eFolder.

Notes:

- Claims documents submitted through the Digits-2-

Digits (D2D) submission process cannot be recovered when transmission failure occurs. Upon identifying such a case, follow the instructions in M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.A.5.d.
- Claims submitted through D2D can be identified by the D2D claim labels.

II.ii.2.A.5.b. Allowing Time for Automatic Retransmission of Documents That Failed to Upload

In most situations, if claims documents failed to upload through EVSS to the eFolder, the documents will be retransmitted within two weeks without any RO action.

Follow the steps in the table below when a claim is received without supporting claims documents.

Step	Action
1	Add a new contention in VBMS with the following attributes: **In the field …** / **Enter …** CONTENTION / *EVSS*. CLASSIFICATION / *Administrative Issue*. DATE OF CONTENTION / (default to DOC). TYPE / *New*. MEDICAL / *No*.
2	Add a tracked item to indicate the failure-to-upload issue is pending resolution.
3	Add a note that states: S*ource documents missing*.

Important: Ensure the claim goes to *Ready to Recall – Yes* status.
References: For more information on
- creating a tracked item in VBMS, see the *VBMS Core User Guide*, and
- the appropriate tracked item for claims documents failing to upload, see M21-4, Appendix D.1.

II.ii.2.A.5.c. Requesting Retransmission of Claims Documents That Failed to Upload

Follow the steps in the table below if claims documents fail to upload after the 15-day period referenced in Step 2 of the procedure outlined in M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.A.5.b, ends.

Step	Action
1	Send an encrypted e-mail to the EVSS Help Desk. • Enter the following in the subject line of the e-mail: *Requesting retransmission of VA claims submission service website documents that failed to upload*. • Provide the following in the body of the e-mail: • date the EP was established • claim label • VBMS claim identification (ID) number • claimant's name, and

	• an indication of what documents are missing.
2	Upload a copy of the e-mail to the eFolder.
3	Update the track item to indicate the first follow-up has been completed.
4	Add a note that states: *EVSS Help Desk contacted for assistance in obtaining documents that failed to upload*.
5	After the 15-day period referenced in Step 4 ends, • review the eFolder to determine if the missing documents have been uploaded, and • follow the instructions in the table below. **If the documents are …** / **Then …** available: • continue processing the claim, and • disregard the remaining steps in this table. not available: follow-up with the EVSS Help Desk until • the claims documents are uploaded successfully, or • a negative response from the EVSS Help Desk is received, indicating that the claims documents cannot be uploaded. ***Notes***: • Extend the suspense date of the tracked item by one week after each follow-up until the • claims documents are uploaded successfully, or • EVSS Help Desk provides a negative response. • Reference the COM ticket number in the follow-up emails. Upload a copy of all e-mail communication with the EVSS Help Desk to the eFolder.
6	Follow the lost claims procedures in M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.A.3.b if the EVSS Help Desk provides a negative response.
7	Upload the negative response to the eFolder, if applicable.

II.ii.2.A.5.d. Notifying a VSO That Claims Documents Submitted Through D2D Failed to Upload

The D2D application submission process does not have functionality to re-transmit documents that have failed to upload. Follow the instructions in the table below when claims documents submitted through D2D fail to upload.

Step	Action
1	Add a new contention in VBMS with the following attributes: **In the field …** / **Enter …**

	CONTENTION	*D2D*.
	CLASSIFICATION	*Administrative Issue*.
	DATE OF CONTENTION	(default to DOC).
	TYPE	*New*.
	MEDICAL	*No*.
2	Send an encrypted e-mail to the Veterans service organization (VSO) that submitted the claims documents. • Enter the following in the subject line of the e-mail: *Requesting resubmission of D2D documents that failed to upload*. • Provide the following in the body of the e-mail: • date the EP was established • claim label • VBMS claim ID number • claimant's name, and • an indication of what documents are missing.	
3	Upload a copy of the e-mail to the eFolder.	
4	Add a tracked item to indicate the failure-to-upload issue is pending resolution.	
5	Add a note that states: *VSO contacted for assistance in obtaining documents that failed to upload*.	
6	Follow the lost claims procedures in **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.A.3.b** if the documents are not uploaded within 15 days.	

Notes:
- Telephone contact can be substituted for e-mail notification and is encouraged. Document successful contact on ***VA Form 27-0820***.
- Upload all e-mail(s) or ***VA Form(s) 27-0820*** to the eFolder, if applicable.

References: For more information on
- creating a tracked item in VBMS, see the *VBMS Core User Guide*, and
- the appropriate tracked item for claims documents failing to upload, see **M21-4, Appendix D.1**.

From <https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000174866/M21-1-Part-II-Subpart-ii-Chapter-2-Section-A-Folder-Maintenance>

M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, Chapter 2, Section B - Restricted Records Storage and Control

Article ID: 554400000174867
Updated Feb 24, 2023
Topics
M21-1 Adjudication Procedures Manual >
Part 02 (Part II). Intake, Claims Establishment, Jurisdiction, and File Maintenance >
Subpart ii. Claims Folder Establishment, Maintenance, Jurisdiction, and Transfer >
Chapter 02. Claims Folder Maintenance

<-- Previous Section Next Section -->

Overview

In This Section This section contains the following topics:

Topic	Topic Name
1	Restricted Records Storage and Control
2	Paper Claims Folders Requiring Restricted Access
3	Records Pertaining to Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

	(AIDS), Alcohol Abuse, Drug Abuse, or Sickle Cell Anemia
4	Instructions for Handling Service Records
5	Handling Requests for the Return of Service Treatment Records (STRs) in the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) Possession

1. Restricted Records Storage and Control

Introduction This topic contains information on restricted records storage and control, including

- restricted record and sensitive access designations
- restricted access claims centers (RACC) locations, jurisdiction, and addresses
- handling paper claims folders containing restricted information
- redacting copies of documents containing personally identifiable information (PII) for multiple individuals prior to providing copies to the claimant or a third party, and
- redacting documents containing criminal investigation reports.

Change Date February 9, 2022

II.ii.2.B.1.a. Restricted Record and Sensitive Access Designations

A Veteran's record and claims may be assigned a sensitive access level that restricts access to the record in order to maintain privacy, safety, and to protect against fraud. Claims designated at sensitive level 7 or above, must be worked by one of the restricted access claims centers (RACCs) listed in M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.B.1.b. If the claims folder exists in a paper format, it must also be stored in locked files at the RACC.

Notes:

- The National Work Queue (NWQ) and the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) will only allow users with appropriate sensitive access authorizations to receive claims or view folders with restricted access designations.
- NWQ will route claims to authorized personnel based on the appropriate restricted access claim attributes.
- When a Veterans service organization (VSO) has a question regarding a claim that a RACC is processing, the VSO may contact the RACC by e-mail, using the e-mail addresses shown in M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.B.1.b.

References: For more information on

- appropriate restricted record and sensitive access designations, see the ***Designation and Access of Sensitive Records OBI Letter***, and
- restricted access claim attributes, see M21-4, Appendix E.1.

II.ii.2.B.1.b. RACC Locations, Jurisdiction,

The table below displays the

- name and the Veterans Appeals Control and Locator System (VACOLS) station number of each RACC

and Addresses

- claims folders over which each RACC has jurisdiction, and
- the mailing and e-mail address of each RACC.

Name	Jurisdiction	Address
St. Paul RACC (RO76)	• Employees and designated relatives of all regional offices except Milwaukee and St. Paul • all Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) facilities except Continental District Office and Detroit Human Resources Center • all Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) except those assigned to St. Paul, and • all other sensitive 8 and sensitive 9 records not specifically assigned to Milwaukee or San Diego.	***Mailing***: St. Paul VA Regional Office Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building Restricted Access Claims Center (RO 076) PO Box 11940 St. Paul, MN 55111 ***E-mail***: VAVBASPL/RO/RACC
St. Paul Pension Management Center (PMC) RACC (RO83)	All PMC-related restricted record claims except for those filed by St. Paul employees or their designated relatives.	***Mailing***: St. Paul VA Regional Office Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building PMC Restricted Access Claims Center (RO 083) PO Box 11940 St. Paul, MN 55111
Milwaukee RACC (RO75)	• St. Paul employees and designated relatives of St. Paul employees, and • VSOs assigned to St. Paul.	***Mailing***: Milwaukee VA Regional Office Restricted Access Claims Center (RO 075) 5400 W National Avenue Milwaukee, WI 53214 ***E-mail***: VAVBAMIW/RO/RACC
Milwaukee PMC RACC (RO82)	All PMC-related restricted record claims filed by St. Paul employees or their designated relatives.	***Mailing***: Milwaukee VA Regional Office

		PMC Restricted Access Claims Center (RO 082) 5400 W National Avenue Milwaukee, WI 53214
San Diego RACC	• Milwaukee employees and designated relatives of Milwaukee employees • Continental District Office and Detroit Human Resources Center employees and designated relatives, and • VSOs assigned to Milwaukee.	***Mailing***: San Diego Regional Office 8810 Rio San Diego Drive San Diego, CA 92108 *E-mail*: VAVBASDC/RO/RACC

II.ii.2.B.1.c. Handling Paper Claims Folders Containing Restricted Information

Additional measures must be taken upon identification of a paper claims folder containing information that is of such a confidential nature that

- restricting access to the record is warranted, and
- filing the record in a paper claims folder would not adequately safeguard it from being accessed by those without a business need to view it.

Example: A confidential report from the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Follow the steps in the table below to properly safeguard the restricted information.

Step	Action
1	Place the record containing restricted information in an opaque and windowless envelope.
2	Label the front of the envelope with the claim number and a brief description of the envelope's contents.
3	• Complete ***VA Form 3797, Cross Reference to Confidential Report***, indicating the existence and location of the restricted record, and • file the form on the inside, left flap of the paper claims folder or other file involved. ***Important***: • ***VA Form 3797*** must remain on top of all other material in the paper claims folder at all times. • If the paper claims folder is temporarily unavailable when ***VA Form 3797*** is completed, retain the form in the same storage location vacated by the paper claims folder.
4	Secure the restricted paper claims folder in locked files.

Reference: For more information about locked files, see M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.B.2.

II.ii.2.B.1.d. Redacting Copies of Documents Containing PII for Multiple Individuals Prior to Providing Copies to the Claimant or a Third Party

For the purposes of this block, the term *documents* applies to both the paper and electronic claims folders (eFolders). The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) may not provide information that includes"personnel and medical files and similar files the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy" in response to a request for records under the Privacy Act or Freedom of Information Act.

Pursuant to **5 U.S.C. 552 (b)(6)**, documents containing personally identifiable information (PII) for multiple individuals must be reviewed for relevancy to a particular claimant's record and copies must be appropriately redacted before providing to the claimant or a third party.

Examples of documents requiring redaction include

- copies of orders in which multiple Veterans' PII is provided
- write-outs or spreadsheets covering multiple beneficiaries, and
- any information in which there is reason to believe the requestor seeks the information to commit a crime or cause harm.

At a minimum, redacted documents must

- include only PII relevant to a particular Veteran's records, and
- ensure all other PII is totally unreadable.

Important:

- Any document related to a benefit sought under the umbrella of an individual Veteran's eligibility, but including another individual's PII, such as dependency documents containing PII of a spouse or child, personnel pages, etc., requires redaction.
- Employees should notify their supervisor when there is reason to believe the information requested by a third party will be used to commit a crime or cause harm. Do not release the document(s) and/or information until receiving approval from management.

II.ii.2.B.1.e. Redacting Documents Containing Criminal Investigation Reports

Documents in the paper claims folder containing criminal investigation reports must be replaced with a redacted copy. Claims processors authorized to perform redactions must leave a note explaining all actions taken related to the redaction.

Reference: For more information on redacting documents in the eFolder that contain criminal investigation reports, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.A**.

2. Paper Claims Folders Requiring Restricted Access

Introduction This topic contains information on locked files, including

- **locked files**
- **responsibility for managing locked files**, and
- **releasing paper claims folder records stored in locked files**.

Change Date March 31, 2021

II.ii.2.B.2.a. Locked File

The term ***locked files*** represents a locked room or locked cabinet(s) where RACCs must secure paper claims folders to which access is restricted.

Notes:

- This definition, and the requirement to lock this category of records in a room or cabinet, also applies to paper claims folders the RACC maintains at offsite facilities.
- Locked files must be located in, or in close proximity to, the office of the Veterans Service Center Manager (VSCM) or Pension Management Center Manager (PMCM).

Reference: For more information on

- paper claims folder storage guidelines, see the attachment *Historical_M21-1III_ii_4_SecA_9-27-19*, and
- conversion to a deceased Veteran's claims folder or establishing an inactive folder, see the attachment *Historical_M21-1III_ii_4_SecF_7-11-15*.

II.ii.2.B.2.b. Responsibility for Managing Locked Files

The VSCM/PMCM or designee is the sole custodian of *all* material stored in locked files and is responsible for the proper handling of it. Specific responsibilities include

- filing, safeguarding, and releasing (upon proper request) paper claims folders stored in locked files, and
- maintaining a log showing the
- date of removal of a paper claims folder from locked files
- claims folder number associated with the paper claims folder
- name of the employee with temporary custody of the paper claims folder, and
- date of return of the paper claims folder to locked files.

Important:

- Paper claims folders removed from locked files must be returned by the end of each business day.
- If a document is added to or removed from a paper claims folder in locked files, the log referenced in this block must be updated to show the folder was charged out and back in, even if the folder never left the locked files area.

II.ii.2.B.2.c. Releasing Paper Claims Folders Stored in Locked Files

A paper claims folder stored in locked files may be released *only* to

- RACC or PMC employees with a business need to access the record
- the chief (or properly designated alternate) of the division requiring use of the record, or
- the beneficiary's or claimant's recognized service organization or other power of attorney.

Important:

- Control the movement of paper claims folders in and out of locked files by updating the log referenced in **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.B.2.b**.
- The individual or entity to which the paper claims folder is released is responsible for
- safeguarding the paper claims folder while in its custody, and
- returning the paper claims folder to locked files by the end of each day.

3. Records Pertaining to HIV or AIDS, Alcohol Abuse, Drug Abuse, or Sickle Cell Anemia

Introduction This topic contains information about handling records pertaining to HIV or AIDS, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, or sickle cell anemia, including

- confidentiality requirement under 38 U.S.C. 7332
- Veterans Health Administration (VHA) responsibilities for identifying and maintaining certain original VA records
- copies of records on loan from VHA
- records a claimant or beneficiary submits to an RO, and
- other records that may be kept in the claims folder.

Change Date March 31, 2021

II.ii.2.B.3.a. Confidentiality Requirement Under 38 U.S.C. 7332

The statutory guidelines of 38 U.S.C. 7332 require the confidentiality of VA records pertaining to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), alcohol abuse, drug abuse, or sickle cell anemia.

This statute also requires the confidentiality of information received, obtained, or maintained by an employee or contractor of VA for the purpose of performing HIV, AIDS, alcoholism, drug abuse, or sickle cell anemia program functions regarding an identifiable patient.

For the purpose of this block, a program function includes

- treatment
- rehabilitation
- education
- training
- evaluation, and
- research.

II.ii.2.B.3.b. VHA Responsibilities for Identifying and Maintaining Certain Original VA Records

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is responsible for identifying and permanently maintaining any original VA records pertaining to HIV or AIDS, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, or sickle cell anemia.

VHA specifically identifies these records as falling under the purview of 38 U.S.C. 7332.

II.ii.2.B.3.c. Copies of Records on Loan From VHA

For the purpose of processing benefit claims, VHA *loans* copies of records pertaining to HIV or AIDS, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, or sickle cell anemia to the RO.

RO personnel must

- make no additional copies of these records, and
- destroy the copies in accordance with ***RCS VB-1, Part I, Item No. 13-052.300*** after completing adjudication or other proceedings.

II.ii.2.B.3.d. R It is acceptable for an RO to keep VA records pertaining to HIV or

ecords a Claimant or Beneficiary Submits to an RO

AIDS, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, or sickle cell anemia in a claimant's or beneficiary's claims folder if the claimant or beneficiary submits them to the RO. However, the RO must advise the claimant/beneficiary that because the RO may request and obtain copies of the same records from the VA medical facility having custody of them, the records do not need to remain in the claims folder unless the claimant/beneficiary so desires.
Important: Do *not* disclose the records without the claimant's/beneficiary's consent. Send him/her ***VA Form 10-5345, Request for and Authorization to Release Medical Records or Health Information***, if consent is necessary.

II.ii.2.B.3.e. Other Records That May Be Kept in the Claims Folder

It is acceptable to keep the following records pertaining to HIV or AIDS, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, or sickle cell anemia in a claims folder:

- reports of VA examinations conducted for the purpose of evaluating HIV or AIDS, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, or sickle cell anemia (The provisions of **38 U.S.C. 7332** do not apply to these reports.), and
- records pertaining to HIV or AIDS, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, or sickle cell anemia that originated from non-VA programs.

Important: Do *not* disclose these records without the claimant's or beneficiary's consent.

4. Instructions for Handling Service Records

Introduction

This topic contains instructions for handling service records, including

- **protecting service records**
- **storage of original STRs**
- **handling photocopies of service records**
- **storage of paper copies of service records**
- **proper handling of *VA Form 21-4582, Service Department Records Envelope***
- handling
- **fire-damaged service records**
- **service records on microfiche**, and
- **STRs that contain a deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) specimen**
- **responding to a Veteran's inquiry about the DNA specimen**
- **sample documentation of the destruction of a DNA specimen**, and
- sample letter for responding to an inquiry when STRs
- **did contain a DNA specimen**, and
- **never contained a DNA specimen**.

Change Date April 21, 2016

II.ii.2.B.4.a. Protecting Service Records

Service records are critical in determining a claimant's entitlement to VA benefits. When handling original, paper versions of these records, VA employees must make all reasonable efforts to protect their integrity, appearance, and readability. Employees may ***not***

- make marks on, date stamp, or punch holes in original service

records
- remove service treatment records (STRs) from an STR jacket (unless necessary for photocopying), or
- rearrange the order in which STRs are filed down in an STR jacket.

Exceptions:
- *DD Forms 214,* may be
- stamped or annotated to reflect verification of service, and/or
- reverse-filed on the inside of the right-hand flap of the claims folder for ease of identification.
- Protective envelopes may be punched or date-stamped as long as the contents are not affected.

RACCs must follow the instructions in the table below if
- the thickness of a Veteran's *service records* exceeds one inch, or
- the thickness of a Veteran's *claims folder* exceeds two and one-half inches when the service records are placed in it.

Step	Action
1	Establish another volume of the Veteran's claims folder.
2	File the service records in the new volume.
3	Annotate the outside of the right flap of the first volume of the claims folder with indelible marker, identifying the location of the STRs in the other volume(s) of the claims folder.

Important: When moving a claims folder with multiple volumes from place to place, ensure all volumes of the claims folder remain together.

II.ii.2.B.4.b. Storage of Original STRs

When a claims folder is established, do not return the Veteran's STRs to a service department or the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC), unless a specific request is received.

Note: If the original, paper version of a Veteran's STRs are in a RACC's possession, that RACC must
- store the STRs in the same STR jacket in which they arrived from the Veteran's service department, and
- file the STRs in the center section of the Veteran's claims folder.

Exception: If the STR jacket in which STRs arrived has been destroyed, RACCs may store the STRs in *VA Form 21-4582, Service Department Records Envelope*.

Reference: For more information on handling requests for the return of original STRs, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.B.5.a**.

II.ii.2.B.4.c. Handling Photocopies of Service Records

Follow the instructions in the table below upon receipt of *photocopies* of service records.

If the photocopies were submitted by ...	Then ...
a claimant or the appointed power of attorney (POA)	follow the instructions in **M21-1, Part X, Subpart ii, 2.A.2.a**.
an entity or someone *other than* a claimant or the appointed POA	• if duplicates, dispose of the records in accordance with **RCS VB-1, Part I, Item number 13-052.100**, or • if not duplicates, follow the instructions in **M21-1, Part X,**

	Subpart ii, 2.B.1.b. ***Important***: RACCs have no authority to dispose of original service records.

Reference: For more information on RACC storage of original service records, see M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.B.4.a and b.

II.ii.2.B.4.d. Storage of Paper Copies of Service Records

In order to prevent loss of or damage to paper ***copies*** of service records, RACCs must

- store them in *VA Form 21-4582*, and
- file them down in the center section of the appropriate claims folder.

II.ii.2.B.4.e. Proper Handling of VA Form 21-4582

In order to ensure the contents of *VA Form 21-4582* remain protected, VA employees

- are responsible for repairing or replacing the envelope if it gets damaged or becomes too worn to use, and
- should ***never*** slit the sides or bottoms of the envelope to remove records.

II.ii.2.B.4.f. Handling Fire-Damaged Service Records

On July 12, 1973, a fire at NPRC destroyed a significant number of service records. When a RACC sends a request to NPRC for records that were damaged but not destroyed by the fire, the VA Records Management Center (RMC) Liaison Office (VALO), which shares office space with NPRC, responds to the request by providing *photocopies* of the damaged STRs. The *original* records normally remain at NPRC.

If the VALO inadvertently sends *original*, fire-damaged STRs to a RACC, the RACC must

- *carefully* make photocopies of the STRs for the claims folder, and
- return the original, fire-damaged STRs to the VALO.

Notes:

- Until recently, original, fire-damaged records were routinely sent to and retained by RACCs. Upon receipt of these records, RACCs
- made photocopies of the original records
- placed the *original records* in a *VA Form 21-4582* that was prominently marked *BURNED ORIGINAL RECORDS. DO NOT REMOVE.*
- placed the *photocopies* in a separate *VA Form 21-4582* that was prominently marked *COPIES OF DAMAGED RECORDS*, and
- filed both forms in the corresponding claims folder.
- Upon discovery of a *VA Form 21-4582* containing original, fire-damaged records, leave the records in the claims folder. Do *not* attempt to return them to the VALO or NPRC.

Reference: For more information on service records that might have been damaged by the fire at NPRC, see M21-1, Part III, Subpart iii, 2.E.1.

II.ii.2.B.4.g. Handling Service Records on Microfiche

If there is a paper claims folder, service records on microfiche should be stored in the envelope in which VA received them and then placed in *VA Form 21-4582* to prevent loss or damage.

Do ***not*** staple through the microfiche, since doing so could destroy images of relevant records.

Notes:

- If the frequent and/or immediate review of records on microfiche is necessary because, for example, a claim is pending, it might be advantageous to
- make a hard copy of the records
- place the hard copy in an envelope marked *Copies of Microfiche*, and
- file down the envelope in the center section of the claims folder.
- If the folder is electronic, microfiche must be sent to the scanning vendor.

Reference: For more information on sending electronic media to the scanning vendor, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart i, 1.B.2.d**.

II.ii.2.B.4.h. Handling STRs That Contain a DNA Specimen

In June 1992, DoD Health Affairs began collecting deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) specimens to aid in the identification of the remains of deceased service members. This collection provides for two sets of DNA specimens. Each specimen is sealed in a small shipping pouch that is labeled with its contents. Then,

- one pouch is sent to the DoD Specimen Repository in Dover, Delaware, and
- the other pouch is placed in the corresponding service member's STRs.

VA has no need for DNA specimens and has removed most of them from the STRs in its possession. Nevertheless, the discovery of these specimens may occur during the routine review of STRs. When found, these specimens should be destroyed.

Follow the procedures described in the table below upon discovering a DNA specimen in a Veteran's STRs.

Step	Action
1	Extract the shipping pouch containing the DNA specimen from the STRs and destroy it by either shredding or incineration. (Disposing of the pouch in any other way, to include giving it to the Veteran, is prohibited.) ***Note***: Although the specimen is not biohazardous, do ***not*** open the shipping pouch.
2	Place documentation in the STRs that • indicates a DNA specimen was found and destroyed, and • identifies the • type of destruction (shredding or incineration), and • date of destruction. ***Reference***: For a sample of the documentation referenced in this step, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.B.4.j**.

Note: VA is ***not*** obligated to notify a Veteran when it destroys the DNA specimen.

II.ii.2.B.4.i. Responding to a Veteran's Inquiry About the DNA Specimen

If a Veteran makes an inquiry about the DNA specimen, VA is only obligated to inform the Veteran whether a specimen was found in the STRs and, if so, whether the specimen was destroyed.

The table below references sample letters for responding to a Veteran's inquiry about the DNA specimen.

If ...	Then refer to the sample letter shown in ...

a DNA specimen is/was of record	M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.B.4.k.
no DNA specimen is/was of record	M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.B.4.l.

Important: ***Never*** dispose of a DNA specimen by giving it to the Veteran.

II.ii.2.B.4.j. Sample Documentation of the Destruction of a DNA Specimen

The exhibit below represents a sample of the type of documentation that must be placed in a Veteran's STRs when VA destroys the DNA specimen.

Note: The use of a specific form to document this action is not required.

A DNA specimen was found in the STRs.
The sample was destroyed by: [circle one]
incineration
shredding
on_____ [date] by
_____ [signature and job title].

II.ii.2.B.4.k. Sample Letter for Responding to an Inquiry When STRs Did Contain a DNA Specimen

Prepare a letter, following the format of the letter below, and send it to the Veteran when

- asked about the DNA specimen in the STRs, and
- a DNA specimen was of record but has been destroyed.

[File Number]
[Veteran's Name]
Dear **[Veteran's Name]**:
We have received your inquiry regarding your DNA Reference Specimen in your service treatment records, which are currently in VA custody.
The same was destroyed by **[burning/shredding]** on **[date]**, in accordance with VBA Circular 21-98-1, dated May 18, 1998, and M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.B.4.h.
If you have any further questions about DNA specimens, you should contact:
Armed Forces Medical Examiner System
ATTN: AFRSSIR
115 Purple Heart Drive
Dover Air Force Base, DE 19902
(302) 346-8800
Sincerely,
Regional Office Director

II.ii.2.B.4.l. Sample Letter For Responding to an Inquiry When STRs Never Contained a DNA Specimen

Prepare a letter, following the format of the letter below, and send it to the Veteran when

- asked about the DNA specimen in the STRs, and
- the STRs *never* contained a DNA specimen.

[File Number]
[Veteran's Name]
Dear **[Veteran's Name]**:
We have received your inquiry regarding your DNA Reference Specimen in your

service treatment records, which are currently in VA custody.
Our records do not show a DNA specimen was included in the service treatment records in our custody.
If you have any further questions about DNA specimens, you should contact:
Armed Forces Medical Examiner System
ATTN: AFRSSIR
115 Purple Heart Drive
Dover Air Force Base, DE 19902
(302) 346-8800
Sincerely,
Regional Office Director

5. Handling Requests for the Return of STRs in the VA's Possession

Change Date June 13, 2018

II.ii.2.B.5.a. Handling Requests for the Return of STRs in VA's Possession

Upon receipt of a request from a service department for the return of a Veteran's original STRs, take the following actions if the RACC is still in possession of the paper claims folder and STRs:

- photocopy the STRs
- certify the photocopy as true and correct
- place the photocopies in *VA Form 21-4582* and file them in the center section of the Veteran's claims folder
- place a copy of the request in the center section of the Veteran's claims folder
- return the original STRs to the service department that requested them, and
- annotate the copy of the request to show
- where the original STRs were sent, and
- the date on which they were sent.

Note: Photocopies of STRs, in lieu of original STRs, are acceptable for the Air Force (SAF/MIBR) at Randolph Air Force Base if VA is holding the claims folder because it is eligible for Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims review.

Reference: For more information on who is responsible for responding to the service department request for records see **M21-1, Part III, Subpart ii, 2.F**.

From <https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000174867/M21-1-Part-II-Subpart-ii-Chapter-2-Section-B-Restricted-Records-Storage-and-Control>

M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, Chapter 2, Section C - Locked Files Folder Maintenance

Article ID: 554400000175823
Updated Jun 28, 2021
Topics
M21-1 Adjudication Procedures Manual >
Part 02 (Part II). Intake, Claims Establishment, Jurisdiction, and File Maintenance >
Subpart ii. Claims Folder Establishment, Maintenance, Jurisdiction, and Transfer >

Overview

In This Section This section contains the following topics:

Topic	Topic Name
1	Locked Files Folder Maintenance
2	Filing Material in Paper Claims Folders
3	Removing Materials from Paper Claims Folders
4	Folder Renovations

1. Maintenance for Paper Claims Folders

Introduction This topic contains information on the maintenance of locked files, including

- general information on maintaining a restricted record paper claims folder
- handling misfiled paper documents that belong to
- paper claims folders, and
- eFolders.

Change Date June 24, 2021

II.ii.2.C.1.a. General Information on Maintaining a Restricted Record Paper Claims Folder

Regional offices no longer maintain or store paper claims folders. The only paper claims folders still maintained are restricted record claims folders stored in locked files as discussed in M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.B. For the purposes of this section, use of the term *paper claims folder* refers to the locked files at the restricted access claims centers (RACCs).

The RACCs are responsible for maintaining Veterans' paper claims folders and providing protection of their contents by

- avoiding overcrowded claims folders in the file cabinets
- replacing folders and envelopes that become damaged, and
- taking appropriate action to address any misfiled
- documents, and
- folders.

II.ii.2.C.1.b. Handling Misfiled Paper Documents That Belong to Paper Claims Folders

Follow the instructions shown in the table below to determine how to handle misfiled documents belonging to paper claims folders.

If the misfiled document belongs with a paper claims	Then ...

folder and …	
no action is required	place a routing slip on the document and route it to the correct paper claims folder for proper filing.
action is required	• establish end product (EP) control, if necessary • place a routing slip on the document • route the document to the correct paper claims folder for proper filing • add a note indicating the type of document being routed to the paper claims folder, and • take appropriate action to address the misfiled document. ***References***: For more information on • handling incoming mail, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart i, 2.C**, and • adding notes, see the **Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) Core User Guide**.

Exception: Follow the guidance in **M21-1, Part XIV, 4.B.1** when the misfiled documents contain Federal tax information.

II.ii.2.C.1.c. Handling Misfiled Paper Documents That Belong to eFolders

Use the table shown below when determining how to handle misfiled paper documents that belong to an electronic claims folder (eFolder) in VBMS.

If the misfiled paper document belongs with an eFolder and …	Then ...
no action is required	route the paper document to the intake processing center (IPC) to send the document for scanning. ***Reference***: For more information on sending documents for scanning, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart i, 1.A**.
an action is required	• establish EP control, if necessary • route the paper document to IPC to send the document for scanning, and • once the document is uploaded into VBMS, take appropriate action on the record to address the document. ***Important***: If the misfiled document is time sensitive, take whatever actions it necessitates *before* routing it to

	the IPC for scanning. ***Reference***: For more information on handling incoming mail, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart i, 2.C**.

Reference: For information on handling a misfiled, electronic document, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.A**.

2. Filing Material in Paper Claims Folders

Introduction

This topic contains information about filing material in paper claims folders, including

- **general policy on filing materials in paper claims folders**
- **filing material in paper claims folders**
- **filing of folder flashes**, and
- **limitation of filing excessive material in a paper claims folder**.

Change Date June 24, 2021

II.ii.2.C.2.a. General Policy on Filing Materials in Paper Claims Folders

File *only* essential material with evidentiary, legal, or administrative value in a paper claims folder.

References: For more information on types of material that should be

- added to the paper claims folder, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.C.2.c**, and
- removed from the paper claims folder, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.C.3.a**.

II.ii.2.C.2.b. Filing Material in Paper Claims Folders

Use the table below to file material in paper claims folders.

Note: If a folder is pulled for any purpose,

- convert old side-filing folders to top-filing folders, and
- ensure that material in the paper claims folder is filed appropriately.

Type of Material	Folder Location	Filing Order
• award prints • overpayment material • all documents relating to • payments • allowances, and • denials, and • Share prints of name changes	Left flap	Top down, with the newest material placed on top

• birth certificates • marriage certificates • divorce decrees • legal documents, and • any permanent type of adjudicative material, including Compensation and Pension applications in support of the claim	Center	Chronological order, with the material organized by date received
education material	Right flap	Top down, with the newest material placed on top
• ***VA Form 26-1833, Advice Regarding Indebtedness of Obligors on Guaranteed or Insured Loans*** • *VA Form 26-6822, Advice of Termination and Indebtedness on Portfolio Loans*, and • *VA Form 20-6560, Notice of Benefit Payment Transaction, with message code 628, STATUS OF RECOUPMENT BALANCE AT TERMINATION*	Left flap	Reverse file in the order shown at left ***Rationale***: This filing order keeps the material on top of all subsequent documents filed.
• ***VA Form 21-22, Appointment of Veterans Service Organization as Claimant's Representative*** • ***VA Form 21-22a, Appointment of Individual as Claimant's Representative***, and • *DD Form 214, Certificate of Release or Discharge From Active Duty*, the military separation document, or its equivalent	Right flap	Reverse file in the order shown at left (e.g. *VA Form 21-22* on top and *DD Form 214* underneath). ***Rationale***: This filing order keeps these forms above the training material at all times. ***Note***: If necessary, add a standard two-prong fastener to the right flap to accommodate reverse filing.

II.ii.2.C.2.c. Filing of Folder Flashes

Use the table below to file flashes in *reverse* filing order to allow the flash to be folded back and remain on top of all subsequent material.

Flash	Location
VA Form 22-6564, Claims Folder Flash – Vocational Rehabilitation Trainee	Left flap of the paper claims folder
VA Form 20-6879, Overpayment Flash	Left flap of the paper claims or deceased Veteran's claims folder

II.ii.2.C.2.d. Limitation

Do not continue to file material in a single paper claims

of Filing Excessive Material in a Paper Claims Folder

folder if the folder becomes bulky and unmanageable. Generally, a paper claims folder volume should be limited to two or three inches in thickness.

Reference: For information on creating additional volumes of claims folders, see the attachment *Historical_M21-1III_ii_3_SecB_8-22-18*.

3. Removing Material From Paper Claims Folders

Introduction

This topic contains information about removing material from paper claims folders, including

- types of material requiring removal from paper claims folders, and
- removal of material from paper claims folders.

Change Date July 11, 2015

II.ii.2.C.3.a. Types of Material Requiring Removal From Paper Claims Folders

Remove the following types of material from the paper claims folder if it has served its initial purpose and has no legal, administrative, or historical value:

- diary forms
- reference and routing slips
- control records
- incoming transmittal or cover letters with no evidentiary value
- envelopes and returned VA original letters with no evidentiary value
- requests for civil service preference certificates
- VA form and form letter requests for evidence (returned originals or file copies)
- rating activity worksheets
- flashes, and
- computer prints not specifically required by directives.

Note: Exercise caution in removing transmittal or cover letters submitted by a power of attorney. These documents may state claims, assert or waive rights, or include legal argument. Differences between a representative's transmittal or cover letter and statements from a claimant or legacy appellant may raise important questions requiring clarification.

II.ii.2.C.3.b. Removal of Material From Paper Claims Folders

Follow the steps in the table below to remove material from the paper claims folder.

Step	Action
1	Remove material contained in paper claims folders that is redundant or of no record value.
2	Dispose of the removed material under RCS VB-1, Part I.

Note: There is no longer a requirement to return documents to the claimant.

4. Folder Renovations

Introduction

This topic contains information on how to properly renovate and protect folder content, including

- general folder renovation policy, and
- renovation of
- segregated folders, and
- non-segregated folders.

Change Date June 24, 2021

II.ii.2.C.4.a. General Folder Renovation Policy

Renovate a paper claims folder as needed to protect the contents.

Perform any required renovation *before* transferring a paper claims folder out of the RACC.

II.ii.2.C.4.b. Renovation of Segregated Folders

Follow the steps in the table below to renovate a segregated paper claims folder.

Step	Action
1	Remove from compartment *A* • change of address notices, and • superseded stop or suspend pay notices and worksheets.
2	Remove from compartment *D* all material dated one year or older.
3	Check the material in all compartments for correct filing sequence.

Reference: For more information on the type of documents filed in each compartment of a segregated paper claims folder, see the attachment *Historical M21-1III_ii_4_SecF_7-11-15*.

II.ii.2.c.4.c. Renovation of Non-Segregated Folders

Follow the steps in the table below to renovate a non-segregated paper claims folder.

Step	Action
1	Ensure all documents relating to payments, allowances, and denials are filed on the left

	flap of the folder.
2	File documents in chronological order, with the oldest document at the bottom and the newest document on the top.
3	Ensure replies to incoming correspondence are filed immediately above the incoming correspondence.
4	Remove duplicate copies of documents *unless* they contain notations of record value.
5	Remove the following documents *if* they have served their purpose and have no record value: • worksheets • control or suspense copies of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) forms • form letters • diary slips • routing slips, and • letters of transmittal.
6	Dispose of the removed material accordingly.
7	Duplicate the old folder's markings on the new paper claims folder. ***Exception***: Do *not* duplicate • the markings on obsolete folders, or • outdated folder notations as discussed in the attachment *Historical_M21-1III_ii_4_SecG_3-2-20*.

From <https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000175823/M21-1-Part-II-Subpart-ii-Chapter-2-Section-C-Locked-Files-Folder-Maintenance>

M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, Chapter 3 - Claims Jurisdiction and Transfer

Article ID: 554400000174868
Updated Sep 12, 2022
Topics
M21-1 Adjudication Procedures Manual >
Part 02 (Part II). Intake, Claims Establishment, Jurisdiction, and File Maintenance >
Subpart ii. Claims Folder Establishment, Maintenance, Jurisdiction, and Transfer >
Chapter 03. Claims Jurisdiction and Transfer

<-- Previous Section Next Section -->

Overview

In This Chapter This chapter contains the following topics:

Topic	Topic Name
1	Jurisdiction of Claims
2	Transfer of Paper Claims Folders

1. Jurisdiction of Claims

Introduction This topic contains information on jurisdiction of claims, including
- general policy for jurisdiction of claims
- jurisdiction of claims involving a special mission or circumstance, and
- determining jurisdiction of claims involving multiple special missions or circumstances.

Change Date September 12, 2022

II.ii.3.1.a. General Policy for Jurisdiction of Claims A claim is generally assigned by the National Work Queue (NWQ) to the geographical area where the Veteran or survivor maintains a permanent address and is generally under the jurisdiction of an office/station known as a regional office (RO). At times the jurisdiction will specifically fall under a pension management center (PMC).

Notes:
- Jurisdiction of a claim includes jurisdiction of the paper claims folder if one exists, unless instructions state otherwise.

- An RO or PMC maintains jurisdiction for folders stored at the Federal Archives and Records Center.
- Generally, a PMC will handle claims involving
- pension benefits
- claims for survivors benefits, and
- accrued benefits.

References: For more information on,

- office locations, see the **Facilities Locator and Leadership Directory**
- geographical alignment of ROs and PMCs, see **M21-1, Part I, Subpart ii, 1.B.2.b**, and
- jurisdiction of requests for higher-level review, see **M21-5, Chapter 5, Topic 1.d**.

II.ii.3.1.b. Jurisdiction of Claims Involving a Special Mission or Circumstance

NWQ will distribute claims involving a special mission or circumstance according to jurisdiction and ranking rules determined by the Office of Field Operations (OFO). Proper routing may require the use of special issue indicators and corporate flashes.

If a station receives a claim that does not fall under their jurisdiction, authorized personnel may transfer the claim to the correct station in accordance with OFO guidelines.
The table below indicates what station has jurisdiction of a claim that involves a special mission or circumstance.

Special Mission or Circumstance	Jurisdiction
Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) employee-Veteran, relative of employee, or a national service officer	restricted access claims centers (RACCs) ***Reference***: For more information on RACCs, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.B**.
live compensation claims and legacy appeals involving • a foreign residence • residence in enemy territory, and • cases involving an Army Post Office or a Fleet Post Office address	Pittsburgh RO ***Notes***: • Jurisdiction is determined according to the Veteran's residence, not the residence of a dependent. • A transient is not considered to be residing in a foreign country. ***Exception***: When a Veteran files a claim for Chapter 18 benefits and the child lives in a foreign territory, the claim will be worked by the Pittsburgh RO. ***Reference***: For more information on foreign residence, see **M21-1, Part X, Subpart i, 3.B**.
live compensation claims and legacy appeals involving residence in a U.S. Territory	Jurisdiction for U.S. Territory compensation claims and legacy appeals is as follows: • Honolulu RO has jurisdiction for American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands (Rota, Saipan and Tinian) • Manila RO has jurisdiction for the Philippines, and • San Juan RO has jurisdiction for Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

all in-service death claims	Philadelphia RO ***Notes***: • The Philadelphia Veterans Service Center (VSC) has sole jurisdiction over all original in-service death claims, to include in-service death claims received from multiple claimants prior to the adjudication of the original claim. • The Philadelphia PMC has jurisdiction over all non-original in-service death claims received after the adjudication of the original claim. ***Reference***: For more information on in-service death claims, see **M21-1, Part XII, Subpart i, 1.C**.
pension and survivor claims in which • the primary beneficiary or claimant resides in a foreign country, or • any payee whose income affects entitlement to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits, receives the income in a foreign currency	Jurisdiction for • service-connected (SC) death and burial claims are the Philadelphia PMC's including claims from the Philippines, and • all remaining PMC claims (to include supplemental claims for Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC) where SC death was already granted) from • the Philippines, are the Milwaukee PMC's, and • all other foreign countries, jurisdiction is shared between the Milwaukee and St. Paul PMC. ***References***: For more information on • PMC jurisdiction of non-foreign residence claims or specific jurisdiction of claim type, see **M21-1, Part I, Subpart ii, 1.B.2.b**, and • eligibility for benefits based on Philippine service, see **M21-1, Part X, Subpart i, 4.A.2**.
higher-level reviews and legacy appeals for pension and survivor claims	decision review operations center
rating action related to Polish and Czechoslovakian Veterans who • file a claim for service connection (SC), or • apply for health care under **38 U.S.C. 109**	Wilmington RO ***Exception***: A claim from a Polish or Czechoslovakian Veteran with *no* service in the U.S. Armed Forces should be denied for no qualifying service by the RO that receives the claim. ***Note***: VA does *not* assign a folder or number to these claims. ***Reference***: For more information on Polish and Czechoslovakian Veterans who served in the U.S. Armed Forces, see **M21-1, Part XIII, Subpart i, 3.G.1.b**.
claims involving *Public Law*	Jurisdiction is split between • the various ROs or PMCs, and

(PL) 97-37, Section 156, Restored Entitlement Program for Survivors (REPS)	• a special processing unit at the St. Louis RO. ***Note***: The office having jurisdiction of the deceased Veteran's claims folder is responsible for determining basic eligibility and forwarding the claim (but not the deceased Veteran's claims folder) to the St. Louis RO. ***Reference***: For more information on jurisdiction of claims involving REPS, see **M21-1, Part XII, Subpart ii, 3.A**.
Philippine cases involving Veterans of the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines while such forces were in the • Armed Forces of the U.S. (July 26, 1941, through June 30, 1946) • Special Philippine Scouts (enlisted between October 6, 1945, and June 30, 1947), and • Alleged or Recognized Guerrilla Service (before July 1, 1946)	Manila RO has exclusive and permanent jurisdiction unless otherwise indicated. ***Exception***: The Philadelphia PMC has jurisdiction of burial and SC death claims and the Milwaukee PMC has jurisdiction of all remaining PMC claims (to include supplemental claims for DIC where SC death was already granted) based on service by Veterans within the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines. ***Reference***: For more information on eligibility for benefits based on Philippine service, **M21-1, Part X, Subpart i, 4.A.2**.
cases involving incompetent Veterans	If a court has appointed a fiduciary for an incompetent Veteran, jurisdiction lies with the RO or PMC for the area in which the appointing court is located.
claims for SC based on radiation exposure where the existence of a radiogenic disease has been verified	Jackson RO ***References***: For more information on • how the Jackson RO receives jurisdiction of a radiation claim, see **M21-1, Part VIII, Subpart iii, 4.A.2.a**, and • radiation claims processing, see • **M21-1, Part VIII, Subpart iii, 4.A.2**, and • **M21-1, Part VIII, Subpart iii, 4.B.2**.
claims and legacy appeals for SC based on exposure to mustard gas or Lewisite	Muskogee RO ***Reference***: For more information on claims for SC based on exposure to mustard gas or Lewisite, see **M21-1, Part VIII, Subpart iii, 3.A.2**.
claims and legacy appeals for SC based on exposure to contaminated drinking water at Camp Lejeune that meet specific criteria	Louisville RO ***Reference***: For more information on the criteria determining jurisdiction of Camp Lejeune issues, see **M21-1, Part VIII, Subpart iii, 8.A.1.c**.

forfeiture cases	St. Paul RACC ***Reference***: For more information about forfeiture cases, see • **M21-1, Part X, Subpart iv, 3.B**, and • **38 CFR 3.900**.
residents of the Armed Forces Retirement Home, or St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C.	Roanoke RO ***Reference***: For more information on claims from residents of the Armed Forces Retirement Home or St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C., see **M21-1, Part VI, Subpart iii, 5**.
Veterans with any service prior to July 16, 1903	Philadelphia PMC
• entitlement to compensation under the former general law, the Act of 1862, as amended • protection of the general law rate provided by former PL 788, 74th Congress • entitlement to Reserve Officer' Retirement Pay under PL 262, 77th Congress, and • entitlement under a special act of Congress authorizing payment to a particular person	Philadelphia PMC ***References***: For more information on • general law cases, see **38 U.S.C. 1152**, and • entitlement under a special act, see • **38 CFR 3.801** • **38 CFR 10.20**, and • **38 CFR 11.109**.
Chapter 31 educational benefits based on service in allied forces	Philadelphia PMC
Chapter 18 benefits for certain children with disabilities born of Vietnam and certain Korean service Veterans	Denver RO ***Exception***: When a Veteran files a claim for Chapter 18 benefits and the child lives in a foreign territory, the claim will be worked by the Pittsburgh RO. ***Reference***: For more information on handling of claims for benefits under Chapter 18, see **M21-1, Part VIII, Subpart i, 3.A-E**.

Notes:
- Do not transfer a paper claims folder to a special mission station unless
- a special mission claim has been established, or
- instructions indicate the special mission station must maintain the folder.

- Claims and/or claimants involving litigated issues may be subject to special review or processing. Special instructions for identification and processing identified cases will be issued by VA Central Office (VACO) and may involve use of special issue indicators, corporate flashes, or other claim attributes.
  References: For more information on
- claim attributes that affect routing, see **M21-4, Appendix C**
- use of corporate flashes, see
- **M21-1, Part III, Subpart i, 2.F.1.b**, and
- **M21-4, Appendix C.2**
- special issue indicators, see **M21-1, Part III, Subpart i, 2.F.2**, and
- transferring a claim, see the ***Veterans Benefits Management System Core User Guide***.

II.ii.3.1.c. Determining Jurisdiction of Claims Involving Multiple Special Missions or Circumstances

The table below indicates what station has jurisdiction of a claim that involves multiple special missions or circumstances.

Special Mission(s) or Circumstances	Jurisdiction
• Integrated Disability Evaluation System, along with • any other special mission	• Providence RO, and • Seattle RO ***Exception***: A RACC claim from an employee of the Providence RO would be handled by the Seattle RO and vice versa.
• Benefits Delivery at Discharge, along with • any other special mission	The special mission RO.
• C-123 aircraft, along with • one of the following special missions: • mustard gas • radiation • Camp Lejeune, or • VACO Special Issue 2	St. Paul RO
• Camp Lejeune, along with • VACO Special Issue 2	Louisville RO
• foreign, along with • one of the following special	Pittsburgh RO

missions: • C-123 aircraft • mustard gas • radiation • Camp Lejeune, or • VACO Special Issue 2	
• mustard gas, along with • one of the following special missions: • radiation • Camp Lejeune, or • VACO Special Issue 2	Muskogee RO
• radiation, along with • one of the following special missions: • Camp Lejeune, or • VACO Special Issue 2	Jackson RO
• Manilla jurisdiction, along with • any other special mission	The special mission RO. If translation or fraud issues need to be addressed, the special mission station will contact NWQ to have the claim transferred.
• San Juan jurisdiction, along with • any other special mission	The special mission RO. If translation is needed, the special mission station will contact NWQ to have the claim transferred.
• RACC, along with • foreign	RACC
• RACC, along with • Camp Lejeune	RACC ***Exception***: A claim from an employee of the St. Paul RACC would be handled by the Louisville RO.
• RACC, along with • one of the following special missions: • C-123 aircraft, or • VACO Special Issue 2	RACC ***Exception***: A claim from an employee of the St. Paul RACC would be handled by the Milwaukee RO.

• RACC, along with • one of and the following special missions: • mustard gas, or • radiation	The special mission RO. ***Exception***: A claim from an employee at the special mission RO would be handled by the RACC.
• In-service death, along with • any other special mission	Philadelphia RO ***Notes***: • The Philadelphia VSC has sole jurisdiction over all original in-service death claims to include in-service death claims received from multiple claimants prior to the adjudication of the original claim. • The Philadelphia PMC has jurisdiction over all non-original in-service death claims received after the adjudication of the original claim.

Reference: For more information on RACCs, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart ii, 2.B**.

2. Transfer of Paper Claims Folders

Introduction This topic contains information about the general policies for the transfer of paper claims folders, including

- **general restriction on transfers of paper claims folders**
- **Federal records center (FRC) facility codes for folder requests**
- **requesting transfer of paper claims folders from an FRC**
- **following up on requests from an FRC**, and
- **procedure to recall folders from VA Record Center and Vault (RC&V)**.

Change Date January 15, 2021

II.ii.3.2.a. General Restriction on Transfers of Paper Claims Folders

VA has transitioned to an electronic claims processing environment and with the exception of some restricted access records, no longer maintains paper claims folders. When an RO requests a paper claims folders that is stored at a Federal records center (FRC) or VA Record Center and Vault (RC&V), the claims folder will be sent to the scanning facility for digitization.

Paper claims folders should not be sent to any location other than an authorized scanning facility, unless otherwise directed by OFO.

Exception: RACCs are authorized to receive and maintain paper claims folders from an FRC or VA RC&V if the file

- has been designated as a restricted record, and
- is not eligible for digitization.

References: For more information on historical rules for the

- permanent transfer of paper claims folders, see the attachments
- *Historical_M21-1III_ii_5_SecD_2-19-19.docx*, and

- *Historical_M21-1III_ii_5_SecE_2-19-19.docx*, and
- temporary transfer of paper claims folders, see the attachment *Historical_M21-1III_ii_5_SecF_1-14-18.docx*.

II.ii.3.2.b. FRC Facility Codes for Folder Requests

The FRC station code is shown on the BIRLS FOLDER LOCATION tab in Share. The table below contains FRC location codes and which specific location to send the folder request to.

FRC Station Code	Location	Transfer Date	Folder Request Location
010	Boston	not applicable (N/A)	010 Boston
011	Pittsfield	N/A	011 Pittsfield
020	Bayonne	ALL	059 Lee's Summit
021	Philadelphia	1954 – 1985	059 Lee's Summit
030	Washington National Records Center	1952	These records are no longer owned by VA. To request a copy of a record at this location, contact William Seibert (314) 801-0909 william.siebert@nara.gov.
030	Washington National Records Center	February - July 1955	
030	Washington National Records Center	1962 – 1978	060 Lenexa
040	Atlanta	1973 & Prior	060 Lenexa
040	Atlanta	1974 - 1994 (from ROs 317, 318, 322)	011 Pittsfield
040	Atlanta	1974 - 1994 (from ROs 316, 319, 320, 323, 327)	060 Lenexa (exceptions noted in next two rows)
040	Atlanta	1986 from RO 316	011 Pittsfield
040	Atlanta	1993 from RO 323	011 Pittsfield
050	Chicago	Prior to 1973	011 Pittsfield
051	Dayton	N/A	051 Dayton
052	Kingsridge	N/A	052 Kingsridge
059	Lee's Summit	N/A	059 Lee's Summit
060	Lenexa (previously Kansas City)	Prior to 1973	011 Pittsfield
061	St. Louis National	1956 - 1959 (from ROs 335,	011 Pittsfield

	Personnel Records Center (NPRC)	339)	
061	St. Louis NPRC	1959 - 1966 (from RO 376)	011 Pittsfield
061	St. Louis NPRC	1960 - 1969 (from ROs 335, 339, 340, 341, 345, 442)	011 Pittsfield
061	St. Louis NPRC	1967 - 1973 (from RO 331)	011 Pittsfield
061	St. Louis NPRC	1970 - 1974 (from ROs 339, 340, 341, 345, 436, 437, 438, 442)	011 Pittsfield
070	Ft. Worth	Prior to 1977	011 Pittsfield
070	Ft. Worth	1977 - 1993	059 Lee's Summit
080	Denver	ALL	059 Lee's Summit
090	San Francisco/San Bruno	N/A	090 San Francisco/San Bruno
091	Laguna Niguel (previously Perris)	Prior to 1967	011 Pittsfield
091	Laguna Niguel	1968 – 1992	059 Lee's Summit
100	Seattle	N/A	100 Seattle

Note: FRCs 020, 070, and 080 are no longer active repositories.

Reference: For more information about FRCs, see **Federal Records Center Locations**.

II.ii.3.2.c. Requesting Transfer of Paper Claims Folders From an FRC

Requests for transfer of a paper claims folder from an FRC are submitted through the National Archives and Records Administration's Archives and Records Centers Information System (ARCIS).

- Use Share to obtain the FRC accession data from the BIRLS FOLDER LOCATION tab
- log into ARCIS and initiate a request for the claims folder
- create a *Physical Claims File Requested* tracked item, and
- upload a copy of the request into the corresponding electronic claims folder (eFolder).

Note: The FRC usually returns the folder to the requesting RO within 10 business days.

Reference: For information on how to use ARCIS, to include log-in and passwords, see the **ARCIS** website.

II.ii.3.2.d. Following up on Requests From an FRC

If the folder is not received within 10 business days of the original request, process a follow-up request to the FRC via ARCIS, by sending an e-mail, or by calling the FRC, and document the follow-up request in the claims folder.

Important: Remember to update the *Physical Claims File Requested* tracked item to reflect the follow-up.

Reference: For contact information, see **Federal Records Center Locations**.

II.ii.3.2.e. Procedure to Recall Folders From VA RC&V

An RO's appointed key user may electronically recall folders retired to VA RC&V using the table below.

Step	Action
1	Check the **Records Management Center (RMC) Source Material Tracking System (SMTS) Portal** to determine if the folder has already been selected for conversion to an electronic record. If the **RMC SMTS Portal** • has a record of the claims folder, go to Step 4, or • does not have a record of the claims folder, go to the next step.
2	Log in to the VA RC&V **Records Retrieval System** (RRS).
3	Enter the following information on the electronic *VA Form 0245, VA Records Center & Vault Reference Request*: • Veteran's last name and first name • last four digits of the claim number • accession number (listed on BIRLS FOLDER LOCATION screen), and • box number (listed on BIRLS FOLDER LOCATION screen).
4	Create a *Physical Claims File Requested* tracked item.
5	Upload a copy of the request into the corresponding eFolder.

Notes:

- First-time key users must register and create a new account. The key user will receive an email from VA RC&V when the account is activated.
- VA is in the process of extracting and digitizing records held by the VA RC&V. There may be instances in the claims folder has been selected for digitization and is en route to the scanning vendor when a claim is received. The folder location may still show a VA RC&V location code during this period which is why the **RMC SMTS Portal** should be reviewed first.

References: For more information on

- VA RC&V, see the **VA RC&V** website
- VA RC&V RRS and saving copies of electronically-submitted *VA Form 0245*, see the ***VA RC&V Electronic RRS Users Guide***, and
- the **RMC SMTS Portal**, see **M21-1, Part II, Subpart i, 1.B.5**.

From <https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001034/content/554400000174868/M21-1-Part-II-Subpart-ii-Chapter-3-Claims-Jurisdiction-and-Transfer>