



# RAPID APPEALS MODERNIZATION PROGRAM

## (RAMP)

### What is RAMP?

- In November 2017, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) launched Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP) with the goal of providing eligible Veterans with the earliest possible resolution of their disability compensation claims.
- Initially began as an invitation only program; on April 2, 2018, the VA expanded RAMP by removing the requirement that Veterans first receive an invitation from VA in order to participate in the program.
- RAMP is voluntary and will provide eligible Veterans the opportunity to enter the new, more efficient review process outlined in the historic *Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017* (Appeals Modernization Act), before the law becomes effective in February 2019.
- Under RAMP, Veterans can expect to receive a review of the decision on their claim much faster than if they remain in the legacy appeals process. The program will allow participants the option to have their decisions reviewed in the Higher-Level Review or Supplemental Claim Lane outlined in the Appeals Modernization Act.
- RAMP will only run until the February 2019 implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act.

### RAMP is Part of VA's Larger Appeals Modernization Plan

- VA's legacy appeal process, which is set in law, splits jurisdiction over appeals in compensation claims between Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) and the Board of Veterans' Appeals (Board), adding more complexity to the appeal process.
- The Appeals Modernization Act establishes a new review process for decisions on VA benefits that is timely, transparent, and fair, and thus allows VA to improve the delivery of benefits and services to Veterans and their families.
- RAMP gives Veterans the opportunity for early participation in the Appeals Modernization Act's new **Supplemental Claim** and **Higher-Level Review** Lanes.

### Advantages of RAMP

- Early participation in the new, more efficient review process for VA benefit decisions
- Faster decisions and early resolution of disagreements
- Multiple review options (Supplemental Claim, Higher-Level Review, or appeal to the Board)
- The same potential effective date for benefits regardless of the review option chosen
- The option to ask for a quick, fresh look at a VA decision by an experienced claims reviewer
- A new requirement that VA must have clear and convincing evidence to change any findings favorable to Veterans in a VA decision

Disabilities determined by VA to be related to military service can lead to monthly non-taxable compensation, enrollment in the VA health care system, a 10-point hiring preference for federal employment and other important benefits. Ask a VA representative or Veterans Service Organization representative about Disability Compensation, Pension, Health Care, Caregiver Program, Career Services, Educational Assistance, Home Loan Guaranty, Insurance and/or Dependents and Survivors' Benefits.



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs



## Who is Eligible for RAMP?

Veterans who have one or more disability compensation appeals pending in one of the following legacy appeal stages:

- Notice of Disagreement (NOD)
- Form 9, Appeal to Board of Veterans' Appeals (Board)
- Certified to the Board but not yet docketed at the Board
- Remand from the Board to VBA

Veterans may check the status and stage of their appeal to determine if it meets the RAMP eligibility criteria listed above by visiting VA's website at: <https://www.vets.gov/>

## Which Review Lane is Right for Veterans?

- **Supplemental Claim Lane**
  - Veterans should select this option if they have additional evidence that is *new and relevant* to support granting benefit claims. VA's goal is to complete these Supplemental Claims in an average of **125 days**.
  - New and relevant evidence is presumed for any Veteran who selects the Supplemental Claim Lane at initial opt in to RAMP.
  - VA will assist Veterans in gathering new and relevant evidence to support the claims.
  - If necessary, Veterans can continue to submit Supplemental Claims with new and relevant evidence or use the Higher-Level Review Lane after VA issues a decision in the Supplemental Claim Lane, by electing further review within one year of the date on the decision notice. Alternatively, a Veteran may appeal VA's decision on the Supplemental Claim directly to the Board. The Board will begin reviewing and deciding these appeals in October 2018.
- **Higher-Level Review Lane**
  - Veterans should select this option if they have no additional evidence to submit in support of the claim, but believe that there was an error in the initial decision. VA's goal is to complete these Higher-Level Reviews in an average of **125 days**.
  - A Higher-Level Review consists of an entirely new review of the claim by a senior claims adjudicator.
  - The Higher-Level Reviewer will only consider evidence that was in VA's possession **at the time of opt-in**. **Neither Veterans nor their representatives will be able to add new evidence during this process.**
  - VA cannot assist Veterans in developing additional evidence. However, if the Higher-Level Reviewer discovers an error in VA's duty to assist in the prior decision, the claim will return to initial decision makers for additional processing to correct the error.
  - Veterans or their representatives can request an optional **one-time telephonic** informal conference with the Higher-Level Reviewer to identify specific errors in the case. Requesting an informal conference may cause some delay in the processing of the Higher-Level Review.
  - If necessary, Veterans can use the Supplemental Claim Lane after receiving a decision in the Higher-Level Review Lane by electing further review within one year of the date on the decision notice. Alternatively, a Veteran may appeal VA's decision on the Higher-Level Review directly to the Board. The Board will begin reviewing and deciding these appeals in October 2018.