

VA DISABILITY CLAIM APPROVAL CHECKLIST

The 4-Step Framework I Advise Veterans to Use Before Filing

Diagnosis • Severity • Nexus • Claim Summary

STEP 1: CURRENT DIAGNOSIS

I have a **current medical diagnosis** for each condition I am claiming

Diagnosis is documented in:


- VA medical records
- Private medical records
- Both

Diagnosis is:

- Clearly stated
- Current
- Specific

Documentation includes:

- Condition name
- Date of diagnosis
- Provider name
- ICD code (if available)

 *Without a diagnosis, the VA cannot grant service connection.*

STEP 2: SEVERITY OF SYMPTOMS

My symptoms are clearly documented

Records show:


- Frequency
- Duration
- Severity

Symptoms explain:

- Functional limitations
- Impact on work
- Impact on daily activities

Supporting evidence prepared:

- Personal (lay) statement
- Spouse / buddy / supervisor statements (if applicable)

 *Severity influences the rating percentage.*

STEP 3: NEXUS (SERVICE CONNECTION)

I can explain how the condition is connected to military service

Type of connection:

- Direct
- Secondary
- Aggravated
- Presumptive

Supporting nexus evidence:

- Service treatment records

- Duty assignments / deployments
- Exposure history
- Medical opinions (if applicable)
- Supporting statements

⚠ *No nexus = denial.*

★ **STEP 4: CLAIM SUMMARY (VA FORM 21-4138)**

This is a method I've advised Veterans to use so their claim is easier for the VA to understand the first time it's reviewed.

VA Form **21-4138** completed

Summary clearly explains:

- Conditions being claimed
- Current diagnosis
- Severity of symptoms
- How the condition is connected to service

Summary is:

- Clear
- Concise
- Consistent with evidence
- Easy for the VA rater to follow

Purpose of this step:

- Acts as a roadmap for the rater
- Reduces confusion
- Helps present the claim as a complete package

FINAL PRE-FILING REVIEW

- All four steps completed
- Evidence organized
- Statements consistent
- Copies saved
- Ready to file through official VA channels

IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER

This checklist is for **educational purposes only**.
It does not constitute legal advice or representation.
Veterans are responsible for filing their own claims through official VA channels.