

Veterans Disability Claims Process Changing?

The Department of Veterans Affairs, in the midst of a multi-year plan to enhance efficiency and clear up a backlog of some 400,000 compensation claims, is changing the way for veterans to file for benefits. These changes are getting mixed reviews.

Historically, veterans could complete benefit application forms by hand and simply mail them to their local VA office. In some cases, even a handwritten letter could start the process. Now, the VA is encouraging the use of "[eBenefits](#)," an online portal and joint effort of both the VA and Department of Defense. eBenefits eliminates most paperwork by having veterans start the process by entering claim information electronically using a step by step interview-style application similar to popular tax software with pre-populated data fields and drop-down menus. Additionally, until the transition to a paperless system begins, the department is also mandating that, in lieu of any written communications, a standard form be completed for claims or appeals.

Not everyone is heralding these changes. According to a recent [Fox News Report](#), veterans group representatives from the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars cite a lack of internet access among older veterans and delayed start dates for retroactive pay (meaning the benefits clock only begins when the online form is complete and not when even a partially complete handwritten form is received, as it does now) could cost deserving veterans thousands of dollars.

Still, the VA stresses that these moves afford veterans a "simpler, faster" process for veterans, simply by giving the benefits processors who actually manage the claims the convenience of a paperless and searchable electronic database. Additionally, for veterans who don't have internet access at

home or who find difficulty navigating the system or the standardized forms, any accredited veterans service organization will provide one-on-one assistance.

Additionally, they say, as new systems will provide quicker and “more accurate” decisions, the department believes it will, as a result, reach its 2015 goal of completed claims in 125 days with 98% accuracy and no backlog.

We’ll keep an eye on this issue as it develops and share any new information as it becomes available.

Of course, if you have any questions about [veterans benefits](#) or the disability claims process, [contact us](#).