



Essential Veteran Services

EVALUATIONS & NEXUS LETTERS

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5 Steps to Start a Mental Health VA Claim

A simple guide to help Veterans understand the process, organize their thoughts, and take the first step toward support.

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This is not a diagnosis or a claim submission — it's a starting point.

01 Understand

02 Reflect

03 Prepare

You Don't Have to Navigate This Alone

Filing a VA mental health claim can feel confusing, overwhelming, and emotionally heavy. Many Veterans aren't sure where to begin or what even "counts" as a mental health condition.

THIS GUIDE IS DESIGNED TO HELP YOU:

01

Understand the basic steps of a mental health VA claim

02

Reflect on your symptoms and experiences

03

Prepare yourself for the next stage of the process

This is not a diagnosis or a claim submission — it's a starting point.

THE 5 STEPS TO STARTING A MENTAL HEALTH VA CLAIM

01

Recognize Your Mental Health Condition

02

Connect It to Your Military Service

03

Gather Supporting Evidence

04

Reflect on Your Symptoms & Daily Impact

05

Seek Professional Guidance

Each step helps you move from uncertainty to readiness. Every step above is a link to its page.

You deserve clarity. You deserve support. And your experience matters.

Step 1: Recognize Your Conditions

Mental health conditions don't always look the same for everyone. Many Veterans live with symptoms for years before realizing they may be service-connected.

YOU MAY NOTICE:

Changes in mood or personality

Difficulty sleeping or concentrating

Emotional numbness or heightened reactions

Withdrawal from others

Persistent stress or anxiety

Acknowledging what you're experiencing is the first step toward healing and support.

NOTES:

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Common Mental Health Conditions

Common Mental Health Conditions in VA Claims.

Check any conditions that feel relevant to your experience:

☐ PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder)

☐ Insomnia / Sleep Disorders

☐ Anxiety Disorders

☐ Panic Disorder

☐ Depression

☐ Social Anxiety

☐ Adjustment Disorder

☐ Trauma-related Disorders

☐

Other:

You do not need to self-diagnose — this list is for reflection and awareness.

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NOTES:

Physical & Medical Conditions Matter Too

Mental health and physical health are deeply connected. For many Veterans, emotional stress, trauma, or long-term mental health challenges can contribute to physical or medical conditions over time.

Some Veterans experience:

Chronic pain or unexplained symptoms

Fatigue or sleep disturbances

Gastrointestinal issues

Headaches or migraines

Muscle tension or inflammation

These physical conditions may exist alongside mental health symptoms and deserve attention and evaluation.

You do not need to know how everything is connected yet. This page is simply to help you recognize what you may be experiencing in your body as well as your mind.

LIST ANY PHYSICAL OR MEDICAL CONDITIONS YOU ARE CURRENTLY DEALING WITH OR HAVE BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH:

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IF KNOWN, NOTE WHEN THESE SYMPTOMS BEGAN OR WORSENE:

Step 2: Connect Conditions to Service

A VA mental health claim must show a link between your condition and your military service.

ASK YOURSELF:

01

Did symptoms begin during or after service?

02

Was there a specific event, stressor, or environment that impacted me?

03

Did my role or experiences contribute to my mental health struggles?

KEY TERM

This connection is often called a “Nexus” and represents a link between service and symptoms.

NOTES:

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Step 3: Gather Evidence

You may already have more evidence than you realize.

- ☐ Medical or mental health records
- ☐ Service records or deployment history
- ☐ Personal statements or notes
- ☐ Statements from family, friends, or coworkers
- ☐ Prior diagnoses or evaluations
- ☐ Therapy or counseling documentation

Every piece helps tell your story more clearly.

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NOTES:

Step 4: Symptom Reflection Page

When did these symptoms begin?

How do they affect your daily life? (work, relationships, sleep, mood)

What situations make symptoms worse?

What support have you tried so far?

What would you like help with most right now?

This reflection can later support medical evaluations and professional reviews.

Step 5: Seek Professional Guidance

Navigating VA mental health claims can be complex.

Many Veterans benefit from working with qualified professionals who understand mental health evaluations and VA documentation.

PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE CAN HELP:

01

Clarify your condition

02

Organize your evidence

03

Ensure your story is accurately represented

04

Reduce stress and confusion

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You do not have to figure this out on your own.

NEXT STEPS

Need Help With Your Next Step?

Essential Veteran Services supports Veterans seeking clarity and guidance in mental health-related VA claims.

If you're ready to explore your options or want professional insight, we're here to help.

Follow us on social media for education and resources.

CONNECT WITH US TODAY



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