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## VA improves access to claims information

VA's Claim Status Tool allows Veterans to view the status of their VA claims online using their VA.gov login. This tool displays which claims are in process and identifies any actions Veterans need to take. It also [gives Veterans the ability to review recent claim activity](#).

### Claim Status Tool enhancements

VA recently enhanced the Claim Status Tool to improve your digital, self-service experience. The tool now shows a breakdown of the eight-step disability claims process, making it easier to understand where your claim currently is. The steps include:

- Step 1: Claim received
  - VA receives your claim in its system.
- Step 2: Initial review
  - VA reviews your claim for basic information (e.g., name, Social Security Number).
- Step 3: Evidence gathering
  - VA reviews your claim to ensure it contains all necessary information. VA may ask for more evidence at this step of the claims process. Additional evidence could include a claim-related medical exam or medical records from a VA or non-VA provider.
- Step 4: Evidence review
  - VA reviews all collected evidence for a claim.
- Step 5: Rating
  - VA decides your claim and determines the disability rating.
- Step 6: Preparing decision letter
  - VA prepares the decision letter. Though this letter cannot be viewed in VA.gov until Step 8, it will identify if you are eligible for additional benefits. This letter will include details such as disability ratings, amount of monthly payments and when payments begin.

- Step 7: Final review
  - A senior reviewer from VA will conduct a final review of the claim and decision letter.
- Step 8: Decision letter available
  - You can view and download your decision letter for the claim on the Status page of the Claim Status Tool.

## **More about the Claim Status Tool**

The Claim Status Tool contains three main tabs:

- Status: The Status tab tells you what actions you can take to support your claim and lists requests for third parties.
- Files: The Files tab displays information requests to you, a button for uploading files and a list of supporting documents you have submitted to VA.
- Overview: The Overview tab provides you with a description of the claims process, spotlights each step, and explains the process may return to a previous step if more information is needed.

You no longer have to contact a call center or regional office for claims information. The claim status tool allows you to access important claim information when you need it. This tool is another step forward in VBA's ongoing mission to support Veterans and their families. To learn more about using the claim status tool, please visit [the Claims Status page](#).

## **Avoiding predatory practices**

### **Protect Yourself and Your Pocketbook Online**

Have you ever spent money on a service only to realize it was offered for free? For example, paying to file a student loan application with a non-government site when it is free to file on the official FAFSA website? These types of practices may not be illegal scams, but they can prey on unsuspecting people and cause them to pay unnecessary fees.

One form of this type of practice particularly impacts Veterans and families: websites that charge for access to VA forms or other materials that are readily available free of charge on the VA website.

In addition to charging an unnecessary fee, these forms may also be outdated, requiring Veterans and their families to waste time completing the form again after it is submitted to VA.

To avoid this type of predatory practice, it is important to review websites and resources for accuracy. When searching for VA or other government materials, keep in mind:

Safe search engine practices: If you are utilizing a search engine (e.g., Google, Bing, or similar), the first items at the top of your search may have paid to appear there! The first item in a search result may not be the best one.

Evaluate the URL: For government-related forms or resources, ensure the website contains .gov at the end of the URL.

Utilize search tools available on government sites: Instead of searching for materials through a search engine, use the search feature on government sites. Websites like [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) have a search feature to assist Veterans and their families quickly reach the right resources.

Report predatory practices: In order to ensure others do not fall victim to predatory practices, report any predatory practices or suspicious activity you experience.

Remember: Veterans or their families seeking materials or claim-filing assistance should not be charged as these are provided for free through VA and Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs). To better protect yourself, please review these important and helpful resources:

- [VA: Find a VA Form](#)
- [Information on government imposters and scams](#)
- [Information on how to make a report with VA's Accreditation, Discipline, & Fees Program Office](#)
- [Veteran, Service Member, And Family Fraud Evasion \(VSAFE\) Website](#)

**"Be on your guard, stand firm in the faith, being men of courage, be strong."  
1Cor 16:13**

Sincerely,

*William A. Harris, Jr.*

William A. Harris, Jr.

William A. Harris, Jr., USAF Retired

President, Veterans for Christ, Inc.

[www.veteransforchristinc.org](http://www.veteransforchristinc.org)

## **Need to contact VA?**

[Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255](#) and press 1, [Chat](#), or Text 838255

[Homeless Veteran Resources: 1-877-424-3838](#) or [Chat](#)

[White House VA Hotline: 1-855-948-2311](#)

[1-800-MyVA411 \(800-698-2411\)](#) is never the wrong number