

# THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO WINNING YOUR PTSD VA CLAIM





**ABOUT  
8 MILLION  
ADULTS  
SUFFER  
FROM PTSD**

## **WHAT IS PTSD?**

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that is classified as a trauma and stressor related disorder. PTSD can be caused by many experiences including combat, in-service personal assault or harassment, military sexual trauma, or any traumatic event. The symptoms of PTSD are often debilitating to the individual and those close to them. Some of the specific symptoms of PTSD include:

- Avoiding situations that remind the person of the traumatic event
- Negative changes in beliefs and feelings
- Feeling jittery
- Always being on alert and looking out for danger
- Being overly startled by loud noises or surprises
- Experiencing the need to have one's back to the wall in a public place

In order for these symptoms to be diagnosed as PTSD, they must cause significant distress or impairment in an individual's social and occupational functioning.

## **HOW IS PTSD PROVEN?**

**ABOUT 37%  
OF THOSE  
DIAGNOSED  
WITH PTSD  
ARE CLASSIFIED AS  
HAVING SEVERE SYMPTOMS**

The VA uses the criteria above to ensure it gets the full picture of how PTSD is impacting an individual's life. There are three elements needed to establish service connection for PTSD to receive VA benefits.

### **DOES THE VETERAN HAVE A CURRENT DIAGNOSIS OF PTSD FROM A QUALIFIED MEDICAL EXPERT?**

For the VA to accept a veteran's PTSD in a service-connected compensation claim, a PTSD diagnosis must be made by a qualified medical expert. Although many veterans are treated by the VA or private therapists such as licensed

mental health social workers and licensed counselors, these practitioners are not doctors and the VA will not accept their opinion initially diagnosing PTSD.

### **DOES THE VETERAN HAVE CREDIBLE SUPPORTING EVIDENCE OF AN IN-SERVICE STRESSOR?**

It can be difficult to figure out what evidence is needed to show evidence of an inservice stressor. However, to make it simple, evidence can be sorted by what the PTSD is related to. For example:

- PTSD Diagnosed During Active Military Service
- PTSD Related to Fear of Hostile Military or Terrorist Activity
- PTSD for Combat Veterans
- PTSD for In-Service Personal Assault or Trauma as Stressor
- If none pertain to the veteran, then there must be evidence that corroborates the occurrence of the stressor.

### **DOES THE VETERAN HAVE EVIDENCE OF A CAUSAL LINK BETWEEN THE CURRENT SYMPTOMATOLOGY AND THE CLAIMED IN-SERVICE STRESSOR?**

The last thing that needs to be shown to establish service-connection for PTSD is a causal nexus, or link, between the current symptomology and the in-service stressor. To prove this the veteran must get an opinion by a medical expert. For the opinion to be sufficient, the doctor must review relevant records about the veteran's stressor. The evidence must show that the stressor at least contributed to the current symptoms.

## **HOW TO WRITE A STRESSOR STATEMENT FOR YOUR PTSD CLAIM**

While filing your VA claim for PTSD you may need to submit a stressor statement which is a written account of the stressful events you experienced in the military.

- Forms VA Form 21-0871 (trauma not relating to personal assault) and VA Form 21-0781a (stressors related to personal assault, including military sexual trauma and physical attacks)
- The date of the incident
- Description of the event

### **While writing your statement, remember these 4 C's:**

- **Careful:** Take care to be very detailed. When in doubt about the accuracy of a detail leave it out.
- **Complete:** Use every part of the form. The VA gives you space to elaborate, so use it.
- **Connect:** Connect with those who served with you to help with details and dates.
- **Contact:** When in doubt, get help. These forms are tricky to fill out alone and it is possible to hurt the case more than help it. Contact Veterans Help Group. We are a team of experts and ready to help with your case.

# VA DISABILITY RATING

The VA rating formula goes from 0 percent to 100 percent, in increments of 10. Try the free VA Disability Calculator at the Veterans Help Group website under Resources or [click here](#).

When determining the appropriate rating, the VA considers the impact of the service-connected PTSD on occupational and social impairment. Symptoms that the VA considers when rating PTSD include, but are not limited to:

- Impairment in thought processes or communication
- Grossly inappropriate behavior
- Persistent danger of hurting self or others
- Suicidal ideation
- Intermittent inability to perform activities of daily living
- Memory loss
- Panic or depression affecting the ability to function
- Impaired impulse control
- Chronic sleep impairment
- Decreased work efficiency
- Frequency of psychiatric symptoms
- Severity of psychiatric symptoms
- Duration of psychiatric symptoms
- Length of remissions

## CAN THE VA REDUCE YOUR PTSD RATING?

**Yes.** Your PTSD rating can be reduced. The VA can lower your disability rating and reduce your monthly benefits for PTSD if it feels that your condition has improved. However, they must follow certain guidelines.

- 1. Scheduled Re-Examinations:** The VA will evaluate whether your disability should be scheduled for a future re-examination. The VA usually makes these determinations if they believe your disability can be expected to improve.
- 2. Evidence of Change in Condition:** The VA can also order a re-examination at any time if there is new, relevant medical evidence that your disability has improved.

**67%**  
**OF PEOPLE**  
**EXPOSED TO MASS**  
**VIOLENCE HAVE**  
**BEEN SHOWN TO**  
**DEVELOP PTSD**

## WHEN IS MY PTSD RATING PROTECTED FROM REDUCTION?

Under certain circumstances the VA has a more difficult burden to meet before they can reduce your PTSD rating. The VA must show sustained improvement in order to propose a reduction. However:

1. The VA cannot use just one re-examination to show sustained improvement. The VA must show through medical records and a re-examination that you are not just temporarily experiencing improvement; or
2. the VA must show that evidence in your file predominately demonstrates “sustained” improvement.

Either way, it is often difficult for the VA to establish sustained improvement.

## TIPS FOR YOUR PTSD CLAIM

1. Recognize and document symptoms when they arise
2. Get treatment for your PTSD
3. You do not have to limit yourself to only one stressor
4. Reach out to buddies you served with for help with dates, issues, and act as a witness
5. Use statements of friends and family to document the nature and symptoms of your disability
6. Get a complete copy of your claims file, including service treatment records and post service treatment records from the VA
7. Understand the basics of claims and appeals process
8. Keep the VA updated
9. Attend your Compensation and Pension examination and obtain and copy of the report
10. Hire an experienced advocate Veterans Help Group is standing by to help you with your claim

## TESTIMONIALS

Veterans Help Group changed my life forever. It was a long process but they were successful in getting me my 100% VA disability rating. There were times that I thought this would not happen but they kept a positive outlook and guided me through this process like no one else could. You could not ask for a more professional person and team to help you. I will be in debt to them as long as I live. I just hope I can pay it forward half as much to the next veteran. Thank you everyone at the company God bless. Five stars is not enough of a rating I wish I could give 1000 stars!!! – **R. Crowson**

My VA Settlement, as a result of Veterans Help Group and my advocate's hard work, exceeded all my expectations. They are a professional advocacy that cares about veterans. They are diligent hard working and determined to win your case no matter how long it takes. I received a positive decision regarding compensation that took them a far shorter time than it would have taken me if I had continued to pursue it on my own. I would recommend them to any veteran experiencing issues with VA. I am grateful and blessed to have had them as my representative. – **Valentino**

Thank you so very much for assisting me in my VA claim. Your company helped me to receive my VA benefits and to maximize them. I could not have done this without your help. Your company stepped in and fought on my behalf, and it was well worth the process. Words cannot express how grateful I am for all your company has done for me. – **R. Miller**

Words are just not enough, to express the gratitude that I feel towards the Veterans Help Group's staff and advocates. I was awarded my 100% VA settlement as a result of their hard work and dedication. They have given me rest from my stress and are truly an asset to the group. Thank you so much for a job well done!! – **M. Cruz**

## ABOUT US

At Veterans Help Group our goal is to make every veteran's experience personal to their circumstances. Our professional team is dedicated to altering living conditions for veterans for the better. Through our professional and volunteer work, we actively seek to improve the lives of veterans. If you want to find out more about what our team can do for you, contact us today.

## WE MAKE IT AS EASY AS 1,2,3.

### AND YOU WONT PAY A PENNY UNLESS WE WIN YOUR CASE!

- **WE INVESTIGATE** - We start with a one-on-one consultation to learn about your case. We gather all the necessary documentation and evidence we'll need to win your case.
- **WE TAKE ACTION** - We build a strategy based on over 30 years of successfully winning cases. We then work directly with the VA on your behalf, following through, and communicating with you every step of the way.
- **WE FIND THE RESOLUTION** - We have a 95% success rate in winning cases. We continue to work though the red-tape and battle the VA if necessary until we get the resolution you deserve.

REPRESENTING VETERANS ACROSS THE USA

**VETERANS HELP GROUP**

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