

**INFORMATION PAPER**  
**Benefits Executive Committee Decision of Certified Complete Service**  
**Treatment Records Transmitted Electronically by December 2013**

**Purpose:**

- To secure Joint Executive Committee (JEC) affirmation of Benefits Executive Committee (BEC) Co-chair decision on Department of Defense (DoD) provision of certified Service Treatment Records (STRs) to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for purposes of claims and benefits entitlement adjudication and to assist in the eliminating the backlog. This DoD commitment is a significant game changer VA and demonstrates DoD's leadership and our partnership to care for our service members who transition to Veteran status.

**Background:**

- The Veterans' Claims Assistance Act (VCAA), enacted at 38 U.S.C. § 5103, and implanted in regulation 38 C.F.R. § 3.159, requires VA generally to assist a claimant by obtaining all records, which are potentially relevant to a compensation claim filed with a Regional Office (RO). This duty to assist includes a heightened duty to obtain *all* STRs and must make *every possible effort* to obtain the records in DoD custody, unless and until it is reasonable certain that either the records do not exist or that continuing efforts to obtain them would be futile.
- The DoD commitment to complete a records certification process at the service level and transmitting these STRs, to include medical documentation generated through TRICARE and other contract medical providers, is of vital importance to effective and timely claims processing. Today, VA's claim timeliness is about 250 days. Almost 175 of those days are spent trying to secure the DoD STRs for a Veteran. This new process where DoD will gather all the records and certify them as complete at the point of transition from service member to Veteran status, assures VA that all medical records generated in-service have been transmitted, alleviating VA of the legal requirement to continue searching for these STRs and instead, begin to rate the claim.

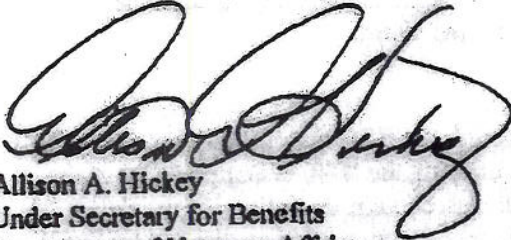
**Status:**

- DoD and VA have reached an agreement through the BEC that military services will provide complete STRs containing a letter certifying the STR as complete "as of the time of transfer." The certification letter will also contain the following provision, "A thorough review of all known record systems was accomplished as directed by DoDI 6040.45 instructions. As such, other than the records enclosed herein, it has been concluded that no further records exist and the STR for the Service Member is complete as of \_\_\_\_\_. In the event additional documentation is discovered, it will be immediately forwarded to VA for utilization in potential claims processing." The letter will have the Service member's name and last four numbers of his/her social security number.


- All five military service departments will establish policies and procedures to certify and transmit these records and an accompanying certification letter to VA. VA in return will work these claims faster to provide decision to our separating service members and their families.
- Effective with the signing of this paper, each service will attach an approved certification letter to VA stating that the records are complete as of the date of transfer either through an electronic PDF searchable file (preferred initially – mandated by December 2013) or as a minimum in paper.
- The December 31, 2013 electronic transmission process is dependent upon approved Joint Initiative Funding (JIF) for both required labor force and new hardware. The BEC Co-chairs *fully support* the request of JIF funding for this landmark decision.

**Next Steps/Way Forward:**

- JEC Co-Chairs affirm this BEC agreement.
- DoD to develop a supplement to DoD Instruction 6040.45 to include electronic data relevant to the STR by March 1, 2013.
- Develop and issue a Directive Type Memorandum (DTM) instituting policy and business practices for standardized use of AHLTA and scanning into the Healthcare Artifacts and Image Management System (HAIMS) by June 15, 2013.
- Military Department scanning into HAIMS and Armed Forces Health Longitudinal Technology Application (AHLTA) enhancement of "Print to PDF" is fully deployed by December 31, 2013.
- VA fully deploys the Veteran Benefits Management System (VBMS) to "capture" the December 2013 electronic data.
- DoD/VA BEC Co-Chairs support JIF funding for this game changer.



Allison A. Hickey  
Under Secretary for Benefits  
Department of Veterans Affairs



Frederick E. Vollrath  
Performing the Duties of Assistant Secretary  
of Defense for Readiness and Force  
Management  
Office of the Secretary of Defense  
(Personnel and Readiness)