

# HOW Are Disability Benefits Decisions Made?

This guide explains the steps Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) takes after you apply for Disability Benefits.

## 1 Claim Preparation



VAC ensures your application includes all information required to make a decision. They order your service health records and may contact you for further information.

When VAC has the required information, your application is placed into a queue for decision-makers.

## 2 The Entitlement Decision Is your disability related to service?



VAC reviews your application and service health records to confirm that your condition is service-related. To be entitled to disability benefits, the diagnosed condition must be chronic or permanent.

If VAC determines you are eligible, your application advances to the assessment stage.

## 3 The Assessment Decision What is the extent and impact of your disability?



At this stage, VAC determines the amount of compensation you may be entitled to by assessing the level of impairment caused by your condition, and how it impacts your quality of life.

## 4 Notification



VAC sends you a decision letter explaining the entitlement and assessment decisions.

If a link to service is not established, VAC sends you a decision letter regarding the entitlement; in this case there is no assessment decision.

If you are entitled to compensation, the letter explains the amount and when you should start receiving it.

## Disagree with the Decision?



The Bureau of Pensions Advocates or Royal Canadian Legion Service Officers can help guide you through a VAC departmental review, VRAB review or appeal hearing. You can find more information on this here.

## When to Contact the Office of the Veterans Ombud



Are the reasons for your decision unclear? Do you have questions? The Office of the Veterans Ombud can provide information and help you navigate the VAC system.

Telephone (toll-free): **1-877-330-4343**

Fax (toll-free): **1-888-566-7582**

TTY (toll-free): **1-833-902-9399**

Mail: **Office of the Veterans Ombud,  
P.O. Box 66 Charlottetown, PE C1A 7K2**

Email: [info@ombudsman-veterans.gc.ca](mailto:info@ombudsman-veterans.gc.ca) or submit an online inquiry form.

## GOOD TO KNOW



**You have a right to get a decision in writing.**

If you do not receive a decision letter, request one from VAC.



**The decision letter should explain:**

- the evidence and supporting documents that were used in making the decision
- your right to appeal



**Disability assessment ratings** can range from 0% to 100%. There are some conditions, such as bruxism, that are assessed at 0%. These conditions may be eligible for treatment benefits but not compensation.

Your maximum financial compensation **cannot** exceed the rate for 100%, but your disability assessment **can** exceed 100%. While you will not be eligible for financial compensation beyond the maximum, you may still be eligible for treatment benefits, so you should still apply for all service-related conditions that do not have an approved disability benefit.



**The length of time** it takes to receive a decision can depend on a variety of factors such as:

- the complexity of your claim – the decision-maker may need to consult with a VAC medical professional
- whether your application includes all required documents
- the length of time it takes to access your service health records

Some applications are processed on a priority basis due to advanced age (over age 80) or medical risk, which simply means they are moved to the front of the line.