

NATIONAL VSO SURVEY

Commission Logo goes here

**WELCOME TO THE
VETERANS' DISABILITY BENEFITS COMMISSION
SURVEY WEBSITE FOR NATIONAL VSO
ACCREDITED CLAIMS REPRESENTATIVES**

The Commission is conducting this survey to learn about your experiences with and insights into the disability claims process. You have been asked to participate because you are an accredited claims representative affiliated with a National VSO. The information you provide will help the Commission gain a better understanding of how best to compensate and assist our Nation's disabled veterans and their survivors.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. Refusal to participate involves no penalty or adverse consequences. If you consent to complete the survey, here are some things you should know:

- You may stop at any time, and you may choose to not answer a question at any time.
- Completion of this inventory poses few, if any, risks to you.
- The information you provide will be kept confidential, and your name or any personal identifiers will not be associated with your responses.
- There are no direct benefits to you for completing the survey. However, the information you provide will help ensure that America's disabled veterans are well served.

Before proceeding, please read and indicate whether you agree with the following statement. *Click the "Continue" box after indicating whether or not you agree.*

I understand that if I participate in this survey, my responses will be sent electronically to The CNA Corporation (CNAC), which is conducting the survey for the Commission, and that only CNAC analysts will have access to my individual responses. I understand further that CNAC will keep my responses strictly confidential, will use them for research purposes only, and will only report aggregated results that will not permit the identification of individual respondents. Finally, I understand that the survey should take me about 30 minutes to complete and will ask me questions about the VA disability claims process.

Given these understandings, I voluntarily agree to participate in this survey.

- Yes ⇒ control passes to first page of the survey
 No ⇒ control passes to a Sorry-You-Have-Decided-Not-To-Participate page

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OMB Approval Received mm/dd/06; Expires 12/31/2007

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Thank you for agreeing to participate. You will now be asked to read and respond to a series of questions. Some questions will have response categories and you will click on the box associated with the category or categories that correspond to your answer. Here is an example of this kind of question.

To what extent do you feel adequately trained to be an accredited VSO claims representative?

- Totally
- Almost totally
- Somewhat
- Only a little
- Not at all

This respondent has indicated that he/she feels “somewhat” adequately trained.

Some questions will contain a response category of “other” and you will be asked to *specify* your response if you select that category. For example, you will be asked how useful it would be to be able to consult with people in various kinds of occupations as you assist veterans and survivors. The question lists several occupations and ends with “Other (specify _____)”. If you click on that response category, please specify which other occupation you would find useful to consult.

Other questions will not have response categories, and you should answer them by typing a **brief** response into the text box following the question. The maximum number of characters that can be submitted as your response to such a question is 255 characters, or about 2½ - 3 lines of type. Please keep your responses brief and to the point so that they will not get cut off.

The survey is divided into several web “pages” each containing a series of questions. At the bottom of each “page” there will be a box that you will click on to electronically transmit all of your responses on that page to CNAC. You can change any of your answers on a survey page before you click *continue*; however, once you click *continue* your answers will be transmitted and you will no longer be able to change them. Please make certain that you are satisfied with your answers and do not want to change them before clicking *continue*.

Once you have completed a page and clicked *continue*, a new page will open. We recommend that you complete this new page right then, but you have the option of exiting out of the website and returning to it at a later time to continue completing the survey. If you do exit the survey before completing it, you can re-enter it by using your unique survey link contained in the email sent to you by CNAC. Please note that you must complete a page and click *continue* before exiting. Exiting a page before clicking *continue* will take you out of the survey but your responses to questions on that page will **not** be saved and will **not** be transmitted to CNAC. When you return to complete the survey at a later time, you will need to re-answer those questions.

Let’s begin the survey now.

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1. Do **both** of the following two conditions apply to you?
- a) You are a Department of Veterans Affairs-accredited representative of a National Veterans Service Organization who is recognized by the VA to assist beneficiaries in the preparation, presentation, and advocacy of disability claims or appeals, **and**
 - b) You currently work at a VA Regional Office actively assisting beneficiaries to prepare and present claims.
- Yes *(Continue with survey)*
- No **(STOP. We're sorry but you are *not* eligible to complete this survey; the Commission is only surveying VSO representatives who meet these criteria)**

Continue

SECTION 1: Training, Preparation, and Needed Skills

2. Overall, to what extent do you feel well-trained to be an accredited VSO claims representative?
- [] Very well-trained
- [] Somewhat well-trained
- [] Not well-trained

3. Indicate how useful each of the following types of training was for preparing you to be an accredited VSO.

	<u>Very Useful</u>	<u>Moderately Useful</u>	<u>Slightly Useful</u>	<u>Not at All Useful</u>	<u>Did Not Receive This Training</u>
a. Formal training (e.g., training course or instruction) offered by your Veterans Service Organization.....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
b. On job training supervised by your service organization.....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
c. Training manual provided by your service organization.....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
d. TRIP training provided by VBA.....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
e. HIPAA, privacy and awareness, or sexual harassment awareness training provided by VBA.....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
f. VBA provided training in how to use VBA computer systems or data to assist beneficiary clients.....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
g. Other (specify _____)...	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

4. List any training that **you** initiated, and indicate whether you would recommend it to other VSOs.

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5. In your opinion, how useful are each of the following to a VSO representative assisting veterans or survivors to prepare and advocate claims?

	<u>Very Useful</u>	<u>Moderately Useful</u>	<u>Slightly Useful</u>	<u>Not at All Useful</u>
a. Clinical knowledge.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
b. Medical terminology.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
c. Interpreting and applying medical evidence in preparing or advocating claims.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
d. Ability to interpret and apply statutes and regulations in preparing or prosecuting claims....	[]	[]	[]	[]
e. Ability to use the VA Rating Schedule in preparing or advocating claims.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
f. Experience in the armed forces.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
g. Experience as a veteran.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
h. Experience as a VSR in the VBA.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
i. Other (specify_____)......	[]	[]	[]	[]

6. How would you rate **your** degree of proficiency regarding:

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Very Good</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>
a. Clinical knowledge.....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
b. Medical terminology.....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
c. Ability to interpret and apply medical evidence...	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
d. Ability to interpret and apply statutes and regulations.....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
e. Ability to use the Rating Schedule	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

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7. How useful do you think it would be to be able to consult with people from the following occupations as you assist veterans or survivors prepare and prosecute claims?

	<u>Very Useful</u>	<u>Moderately Useful</u>	<u>Slightly Useful</u>	<u>Not at All Useful</u>
a. Physician of an appropriate specialty.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
b. Medical paraprofessional (e.g., physician assistant, nurse practitioner, advanced practice nurse.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
c. Registered nurse.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
d. Licensed practical or vocational nurse.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
e. Psychologist or psychiatric social worker.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
f. Lawyer/attorney.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
g. Paralegal.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
h. Rehabilitation specialist (e.g., vocational or occupational rehabilitation).....	[]	[]	[]	[]
i. Medical records or health information specialist.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
j. Health insurance claims specialist.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
k. Other (specify _____).....	[]	[]	[]	[]

8. How useful do you think it would be if people from the following occupations were members of VBA rating teams?

	<u>Very Useful</u>	<u>Moderately Useful</u>	<u>Slightly Useful</u>	<u>Not at All Useful</u>
a. Physician of an appropriate specialty.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
b. Medical paraprofessional (e.g., physician assistant, nurse practitioner, advanced practice nurse.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
c. Registered nurse.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
d. Licensed practical or vocational nurse.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
e. Psychologist or psychiatric social worker.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
f. Lawyer/attorney.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
g. Paralegal.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
h. Rehabilitation specialist (e.g., vocational or occupational rehabilitation).....	[]	[]	[]	[]
i. Medical records or health information specialist.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
j. Health insurance claims specialist.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
k. Other (specify _____).....	[]	[]	[]	[]

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9. Are the office space and facilities provided to you by the VBA adequate for your needs?
- Yes
- No
- The VBA does not provide office space to me

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SECTION 2. Your Experience with Assisting Veterans and Survivors

10. Based on your experience assisting **veterans** to prepare and advocate claims, to what extent do you agree or disagree that the claims process:

	Definitely <u>Agree</u>	Somewhat <u>Agree</u>	Somewhat <u>Disagree</u>	Definitely <u>Disagree</u>
a. Usually arrives at the “right” or a “fair” decision... []	[]	[]	[]	[]
b. Is understood by most veterans..... []	[]	[]	[]	[]
c. Is satisfactory to most veterans..... []	[]	[]	[]	[]
d. Is easy for most veterans to navigate..... []	[]	[]	[]	[]
e. Allows you to adequately assist veterans..... []	[]	[]	[]	[]

11. And based on your experience assisting **survivors** to prepare and advocate claims, to what extent do you agree or disagree that the claims process:

	Definitely <u>Agree</u>	Somewhat <u>Agree</u>	Somewhat <u>Disagree</u>	Definitely <u>Disagree</u>
a. Usually arrives at the “right” or a “fair” decision... []	[]	[]	[]	[]
b. Is understood by most survivors..... []	[]	[]	[]	[]
c. Is satisfactory to most survivors..... []	[]	[]	[]	[]
d. Is easy for most survivors to navigate..... []	[]	[]	[]	[]
e. Allows you to adequately assist survivors..... []	[]	[]	[]	[]

12. Of the following choices, identify the top **three** challenges you face as a VSO claims representative in assisting veteran or survivor clients. First identify your greatest challenge, then your next greatest challenge, and finally your third greatest challenge.

	<u>Greatest Challenge</u>	Next <u>Greatest Challenge</u>	Third <u>Greatest Challenge</u>
a. Assisting clients to understand the claims process..... []	[]	[]	[]
b. Assisting clients to understand what evidence they need for presenting their claim..... []	[]	[]	[]
c. Assisting clients to gather the evidence they need to present their claim..... []	[]	[]	[]
d. Getting claims decided in a timely manner..... []	[]	[]	[]
e. Getting access to examiners, raters, or VA data..... []	[]	[]	[]
f. Managing my case load..... []	[]	[]	[]
g. Finding misplaced folders or documents []	[]	[]	[]
h. Other (specify _____).... []	[]	[]	[]

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13. What do you think could be done to overcome these challenges?

14. Rate the relative degree of difficulty you typically experience in assisting in the preparation or presentation of claims involving:

	Very Difficult	Moderately Difficult	Slightly Difficult	Not at All Difficult
a. Older veterans (age 70 or older).....	[]	[]	[]	[]
b. Service connected injuries or incidents that occurred before 1973	[]	[]	[]	[]
c. Medical exams conducted by VA examiners.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
d. Medical exams conducted by QTC examiners (if used at this RO).....	[]	[]	[]	[]
e. Medical exams conducted by private examiners.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
f. Original claims.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
g. Requests for re-evaluating decided claims due to a change in the veteran's disability condition.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
h. Presumptive diagnoses.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
i. Special issues (e.g., SHAD, mustard gas, etc).....	[]	[]	[]	[]

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SECTION 3. Your Experience with the Regional Office at which You Currently Work

15. Based on your experience working with the VBA rating officials (RVSRs and DROs) at the Regional Office *at which you currently work*, to what extent do you agree or disagree that they generally:

	Definitely <u>Agree</u>	Somewhat <u>Agree</u>	Somewhat <u>Disagree</u>	Definitely <u>Disagree</u>
a. Correctly interpret and take into account the available evidence in deciding a claim.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
b. Correctly apply the regulations and rating schedule in deciding a claim.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
c. Adequately assist <i>veterans</i>	[]	[]	[]	[]
d. Adequately assist <i>survivors</i>	[]	[]	[]	[]
e. Adequately assist <i>you</i> to assist veterans.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
f. Adequately assist <i>you</i> to assist survivors.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
g. Correctly use the information, evidence, and assistance you provide to them.....	[]	[]	[]	[]

16. How would you rate the typical performance of rating officials at this office in rating or otherwise deciding claims involving:

	Excel <u>lent</u>	Very <u>Good</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>
a. Older veterans (age 70 or older).....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
b. Service connected injuries or incidents that occurred before 1973	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
c. Private physician medical exams.....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
d. VA physician medical exams.....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
e. QTC physician medical exams (if used at this RO)....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
f. Original claims.....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
g. Requests for re-evaluating claims due to a change in the veteran's condition.....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
h. Presumptive claims.....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
i. Special issues (e.g., SHAD, mustard gas).....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

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17. Please indicate the amount of judgement and subjectivity that raters in this Regional Office **typically** exercise in rating claims involving each of the body systems listed below. For each body system, would you say that raters typically exercise **more** subjectivity than for most other systems, **about as much** subjectivity as for most other systems, **less** subjectivity than for most other systems, or no subjectivity at all?

<i>Amount of Judgement and Subjectivity</i>				
	More than Most	About as Much as Most	Less than Most	None at All
a. Musculoskeletal (codes 5000-5399).....	[]	[]	[]	[]
b. Organs of special sense (codes 6000 -6299).....	[]	[]	[]	[]
c. Systemic diseases (codes 6300-6399).....	[]	[]	[]	[]
d. Respiratory (codes 6500-6899).....	[]	[]	[]	[]
e. Cardiovascular (codes 7000-7199).....	[]	[]	[]	[]
f. Digestive (codes 7200-7399).....	[]	[]	[]	[]
g. Genitourinary (codes 7500-7599).....	[]	[]	[]	[]
h. Gynecological conditions (codes 7610 -7699).....	[]	[]	[]	[]
i. Hemic and lymphatic (codes 7700-7799).....	[]	[]	[]	[]
j. Skin (codes 7800-7899).....	[]	[]	[]	[]
k. Endocrine (codes 7900-7999).....	[]	[]	[]	[]
l. Neurological and convulsive disorders (codes 8000-8999).....	[]	[]	[]	[]
m. Mental disorders (codes 9200-9599).....	[]	[]	[]	[]
n. Post traumatic stress disorder <i>in particular</i>	[]	[]	[]	[]
o. Dental and oral conditions (codes 9900-9999).....	[]	[]	[]	[]

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18. In your opinion, if different rating officials at this Regional Office each individually rated the same claim for a condition in each of the following body systems, how likely or unlikely would it be that they each arrived at close to the same rating for that condition?

	<u>Very Likely</u>	<u>Somewhat Likely</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>	<u>Somewhat Unlikely</u>	<u>Very Unlikely</u>
a. Musculoskeletal (codes 5000-5399).....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
b. Organs of special sense (codes 6000-6299)...	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
c. Systemic diseases (codes 6300-6399).....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
d. Respiratory (codes 6500-6899).....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
e. Cardiovascular (codes 7000-7199).....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
f. Digestive (codes 7200-7399).....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
g. Genitourinary (codes 7500-7599).....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
h. Gynecological conditions (codes 7610 - 7699).....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
i. Hemic and lymphatic (codes 7700-7799)....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
j. Skin (codes 7800-7899).....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
k. Endocrine (codes 7900-7999).....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
l. Neurological and convulsive disorders (codes 8000-8999).....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
m. Mental disorders (codes 9200-9599).....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
n. Post traumatic stress disorder <i>in particular</i> ...	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
o. Dental and oral conditions (codes 9900 - 9999).....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

19. If you answered somewhat or very unlikely to any of the body systems above, why do you feel that different rating officials might be unlikely to arrive at close to the same rating for the same condition?

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20. When you are assisting a client with a claim, do you have any preferences for which rating official at this Regional Office rates the claim?

- No, it doesn't matter which official rates a claim (they're all pretty much the same)
- Yes, I prefer some officials rather than others rate the claim

21. If yes, why do you prefer some rating officials over others?

22. Are there some VA physician or non-physician examiners who provide medical examinations for veterans served by this Regional Office that you prefer do an exam for a claim that you are assisting?

- No, it doesn't matter which VA examiner conducts the examination (they're all pretty much the same)
- Yes, I prefer some VA examiners rather than others conduct the exam

23. And are there some QTC physician or non-physician examiners who provide medical examinations for veterans served by this Regional Office that you prefer do an exam for a claim that you are assisting?

- No, it doesn't matter which QTC examiner conducts the examination (they're all pretty much the same)
- Yes, I prefer some QTC examiners rather than others conduct the exam
- There are no QTC examiners providing medical exams at this Regional Office

24. If yes to either question 22 or 23, why do you prefer some VA or QTC examiners over others?

25. How would you rate the performance of this Regional Office in carrying out the "duty to assist" for veteran and survivor claims?

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Fair

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[] Poor

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26. How might its performance be improved?

27. How would you rate the coordination between this Regional Office and the military during the Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) claims process involving service members being discharged or recently discharged veterans?

Excellent

Very Good

Good

Fair

Poor

No BDD at this Regional Office

Cannot evaluate (e.g., no direct experience with BDD coordination)

28. And how would you rate the coordination between this Regional Office and the National Personnel Records Center in providing military service records during the claims process involving veterans who were discharged at least several years ago?

Excellent

Very Good

Good

Fair

Poor

29. In your opinion, what is the emphasis on **accuracy** of deciding claims at this Regional Office?

There is too much emphasis on accuracy

There is about the right amount of emphasis on accuracy

There is not enough emphasis on accuracy

No opinion; Not sure; Don't know

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30. And, in your opinion, what is the emphasis on **speed** or productivity in deciding claims at this Regional Office?

- There is too much emphasis on speed
- There is about the right amount of emphasis on speed
- There is not enough emphasis on speed
- No opinion; Not sure; Don't know

31. Again, in your opinion, what is the **relative** emphasis on accuracy **vs** speed at this Regional Office?

- Speed is much more important than accuracy
- Speed is somewhat more important than accuracy
- Speed is about as important as accuracy
- Accuracy is somewhat more important than speed
- Accuracy is much more important than speed
- No opinion; Not sure; Don't know

32. Are you familiar with the brokering of a claim from one Regional Office to another Regional Office?

- Yes *(Answer the next question)*
- No *(Skip to question 34)*

33. In general, to what extent do you agree or disagree that brokering **typically**:

	Definitely <u>Agree</u>	Somewhat <u>Agree</u>	Somewhat <u>Disagree</u>	Definitely <u>Disagree</u>
a. Shortens the time required for a rating or otherwise deciding a claim.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
b. Results in more accurate ratings or other claims decisions.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
c. Makes your job as a VSO representative easier.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
d. Makes the claims process easier for veterans.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
e. Makes the claims process easier for survivors.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
f. Is perceived as more satisfactory by veterans.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
g. Is perceived as more satisfactory by survivors.....	[]	[]	[]	[]

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34. In general, how do you rate the performance of this Regional Office at each of the following points in deciding claims involving **physical** conditions?

	<u>Excel</u> <u>lent</u>	<u>Very</u> <u>Good</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>
a. Identifying a service-related injury or aggravation of injury	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
b. Identifying a current disability.....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
c. Establishing a nexus (connection) between the service related event and the current disability.....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
d. Determining a disability percentage evaluation.....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
e. Assigning the correct effective date.....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

35. In general, how do you rate the performance of this Regional Office at each of the following points in deciding claims involving **mental health** conditions?

	<u>Excel</u> <u>lent</u>	<u>Very</u> <u>Good</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>
a. Identifying a service-related injury or aggravation of injury	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
b. Identifying a current disability.....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
c. Establishing a nexus (connection) between the service related event and the current disability.....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
d. Determining a disability percentage evaluation.....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
e. Assigning the correct effective date.....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

Continue

SECTION 4. Two Specific Issues for You to Consider

36. Disability compensation is intended to compensate veterans for average impairment in earning capacity and impact on quality of life. Based on your experience as an accredited VSO claims representative, do you think that *separately rating* a disability's impact on *reduced quality of life* and *lost earnings capacity* would likely improve, have no impact on, or worsen each of the following:

	Definitely <u>Improve</u>	Somewhat <u>Improve</u>	No <u>Impact</u>	Somewhat <u>Worsen</u>	Definitely <u>Worsen</u>
a. The <i>complexity</i> of deciding a claim.....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
b. The <i>time required</i> to decide a claim.....	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
c. The <i>benefit</i> awarded to <i>veterans</i>	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
d. The <i>benefit</i> awarded to <i>survivors</i>	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

37. The *total* compensation and benefit package available to disabled veterans includes more than just disability compensation (e.g., health care, vocational rehabilitation, grants for adapting an automobile or home, etc). Taking into account disabled veterans' changing needs in today's society. to what extent do you agree or disagree that the current *total* benefit package:

	Definitely <u>Agree</u>	Somewhat <u>Agree</u>	Somewhat <u>Disagree</u>	Definitely <u>Disagree</u>
a. Is fair and adequate and doesn't require revising.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
b. Has the right elements.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
c. Needs to be modified to add additional benefits needed to take part in today's society (Specify _____ _____ _____.)...	[]	[]	[]	[]

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SECTION 5. Your Overall Assessment Of The Rating Process

38. The claims rating process is often said to be a mixture of medical (clinical) and legal (statutory or regulatory) considerations. Based on your overall experience as an accredited VSO claims representative, which type of consideration do you feel is typically the most difficult to satisfactorily resolve?
- Medical
- Legal
- They are equally difficult to resolve

The next 4 questions (39 through 42) ask you to judge whether establishing certain types of claims has been getting more difficult or less difficult over the past several years. *Please **skip** these questions and go directly to question 43 if you have **not** worked as a rating official for **at least 2 years**.*

39. In your overall experience as an accredited VSO claims representative, would you say that over the past several years it has been getting more difficult or less difficult to establish *original service connection* for a typical claim involving a **physical** issue?
- Definitely more difficult
- Somewhat more difficult
- No significant change
- Somewhat less difficult
- Definitely less difficult
40. Again in your overall experience as an accredited VSO claims representative, would you say that over the past several years it has been getting more difficult or less difficult to achieve a satisfactory rating in a claim for an *increased evaluation* involving a **physical** issue?
- Definitely more difficult
- Somewhat more difficult
- No significant change
- Somewhat less difficult
- Definitely less difficult

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41. In your overall experience as an accredited VSO claims representative, would you say that over the past several years it has been getting more difficult or less difficult to establish *original service connection* for a typical claim involving a **mental health** issue?

- Definitely more difficult
- Somewhat more difficult
- No significant change
- Somewhat less difficult
- Definitely less difficult

42. Again in your overall experience as an accredited VSO claims representative, would you say that over the past several years it has been getting more difficult or less difficult to achieve a satisfactory rating in a claim for an *increased evaluation* involving a **mental health** issue?

- Definitely more difficult
- Somewhat more difficult
- No significant change
- Somewhat less difficult
- Definitely less difficult

43. In your overall experience as an accredited VSO claims representative, would you say that veterans typically have realistic or unrealistic expectations of:

	<u>Very Realistic</u>	<u>Somewhat Realistic</u>	<u>Somewhat Unrealistic</u>	<u>Very Unrealistic</u>
a. The disability rating process.....	[]	[]	[]	[]
b. The disability benefit they should receive...	[]	[]	[]	[]

44. Is there anything else you would like to say regarding the claims, rating, and/or appeals process?

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SECTION 6: Information About You

(NOTE: We will only use the information in this final section of the survey *only* to help us analyze how different types of accredited VSO claims representatives respond to the survey, and *not* to identify you or link you to your responses)

45. How long have you been accredited as a national VSO claims representative? *Please report **all** of your accredited service with **any** National Veterans Service Organization.*

_____ Years and _____ Months

46. With which national Veterans Service Organization are you currently affiliated?

--

47. How many years have you been an accredited VSO with **this** organization?

_____ Years and _____ Months

48. In what year were you born?

19 __ __

49. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- 8th grade or less
- Some high school but did not graduate
- High School diploma or GED
- Some college or 2-year degree
- 4-year college degree
- Some education beyond college

50. Are you a veteran?

- Yes → *(Please answer Questions 51 & 52)*
- No → *(Skip Questions 51 & 52 and go straight to Submit Your Responses)*

VERSION w/OMB & NVSO INPUT

NATIONAL VSO SURVEY

51. Did any of your military service include serving in a combat zone?

Yes

No

52. Do you have any service-connected disability for which you are receiving compensation?

Yes

No

Thank you for your participation in this survey! The Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission greatly appreciates it.

Submit Your
Responses