

Emergency Justification for VA Form 21-0538,
Mandatory Verification of Dependents
OMB # 2900-0500

(1) Veteran Ability to submit Claims Impacted Due to COVID-19. Local travel restrictions and COVID-19 mandated health & safety precautions may impact Veterans' and claimants' abilities to file forms, documents, and other responses in connection with VA Claims & Appeals. (2) Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) anticipates a potential increase in the submission of claims during and after the state of emergency for COVID-19. To address the effects of COVID-19 on claims processing for Veterans and claimants and to provide better, faster, and more efficient services, VBA proposes to align our modernization efforts with the way we currently receive certain types of veteran/claimant information. As such, VBA has identified the need to revise VA Form 21-0538, *Mandatory Verification of Dependents*, so we may minimize the potential overpayments that result from the receipt of this form, which could lead to extraneous hardships on our Veterans and claimants. The revision of this form supports the existing automation process, by providing faster and more efficient delivery of service to Veterans and claimants in response to the anticipated increase in claims related submissions that were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. (3) The revision will also enable VBA to process Veteran data faster due to the use of computerized Optical Character Recognition (OCR) which is the automated process to "read" forms for information upload into VBA systems.