

NEW VA NOTIFICATION LETTERS: (SNL) SIMPLIFIED NOTIFICATION LETTER

In order to streamline and speed up the processing of claims, the VA has introduced the SNL, simplified notification letter. This letter was tested in the areas of Atlanta, GA and the St. Paul, MN, with a good degree of feedback.

The VA has already started the change process. When a claim has been completed and whether it is approved or denied, you will see a completely different and shorter format of letter.

Normally a decision letter consists of at least 8 to 10 pages, if not more. With the new SNL's, the length of these letters will be cut in half. There will be less explanation on why a disability was either approved or denied.

The VA states that by not having to type up the long decision letters it will save them time, therefore, processing claims more quickly. As it stands right now, when a decision is made, it can take a Veterans Service Representative up to a full day to get it typed up and ready to go. With the new format, it may take an hour. This will free up the rest of their day to process more claims.

Veterans will no longer receive multiple documents containing duplicate information or complex medical findings and legal terms that are most times confusing. The new notice provides standardized language to improve quality and consistency.

You will begin seeing these letters more and more as they phase out the old process and the old way of rating claims. Contact the VA at 1-800-827-1000 for more information.



FOOTHILLS HOMELESS STAND DOWN 2012 EVENTS PLANNED

Planning is continuing to be underway for the Foothills Homeless Stand Down, planned for April 20, 2012 at the American Legion Fairgrounds in Hickory. This event is planned from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Donations are still needed in the form of clothing and food. Monetary donations are also being taken. Storage space is also a needed. The storage space will be used to house all the donations that will come in. This storage area will be used for future Homeless Stand Down's to house the surplus items.

Please visit the website www.foothillsstanddown.org for more information regarding this event.

APRIL 2012

VA RELEASES DISABILITY BENEFITS QUESTIONNAIRES (DBQ)

Veterans will now have more control over their disability claims process. The VA has released the new Disability Benefits Questionnaires. This questionnaire can be filled out by the VA physician or a private healthcare provider.

There are more than 70 disability benefits questionnaires, which covers a broader range of service connected disabilities.

Once these questionnaire's are complete, the doctor or the veteran can fax or mail the form to the regional office handling your claim.

The DBQ's will help speed the processing of disability compensation and pension claims. DBQ's allow veterans and service members to have more control over the disability claims process by giving them the option of visiting a primary care provider in their community, at their expense, instead of completing an evaluation at the VA facilities.

Providers with active medical licenses must sign and attest to a medical condition. These 70 DBQ's cover a full range of medical conditions to include hypertension, arthritis, and prostate cancer along with heart conditions, kidney conditions and endocrine conditions.

DBQ's can be reviewed and downloaded at <http://benefits.va.gov/disabilityexams>. If you have further questions please visit the VA website, www.va.gov.

**Winston Salem Regional
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251 N Main Street
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**1-800-827-1000
336-631-5231 (FAX)**



DISABILITY BENEFITS
QUESTIONNAIRE



Services of the Catawba County
Veterans Service Office

- Assisting in filing for medical benefits at the new VA OPC in Hickory
- Assist in filing claims for service connected compensation
- Assist veterans and dependents in filing for monthly pension benefits.
- Assist with nursing home and assisted living care options.
- Assist with educational programs such as the Post 911- GI Bill.
- Assist widows and families with burial and death benefits.

VA OFFERING TRAINING FOR RURAL CLERGY

Members of the clergy in rural areas can sign up for free, one-day workshops offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. These one-day workshops will help to educate clergy about the concerns of Veterans and the services offered by the VA in their communities.

"VA has always recognized that faith is an important healing resource for many Veterans," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "These new workshops will provide training that will help community clergy in supporting Veterans in rural areas."

"In addition to providing good spiritual care, we hope clergy will recognize the presence and severity of mental health problems, and know when and how to collaborate with health care professionals," said Chaplain Jeni Cook, Associate Director of VA's National Chaplain Center in Hampton, VA.

Workshops will run through June in rural parts of Virginia, North Carolina, West Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee. Participants will learn about VA benefits and services and about how to contact local VA facilities to request information or assistance for Veterans.

Seating for workshops is limited and pre-registration is required. For more information about dates and locations, visit www.ruralhealth.va.gov/ruralclergytraining.