

Comp and Pen Filing for Disability

(For Best Results)

By Ellen Kozel

A friend and veteran emailed me this past week wanting to know how to go about applying for comp and pen at the VA. I was surprised as I figured he being a Vietnam Vet, and after 40 years, must have gone through the system at one time or another. As I was writing him I thought this would be a good topic for readers as I've done this many times with great success. Here are the best steps to take in filing for disability.

First thing you need to do is gather up everything about your military service. If you didn't save your records that were given to you, you can request a copy of your complete military and medical records from the National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis. Their website is <http://www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel> . You will need information from these records to support your claim.

Once you have these, if you're not already using a VA medical facility, you need to take your DD-214 and go to a VA Medical facility and ask for Registration. They will ask for your DD-214 and your insurance card if you have one and you will be required to fill out some simple paperwork. Next, they will issue you a picture ID card and a primary care physician. You are now in the system.

Next you need to make an appointment in the clinic for the disability you want to claim. Some examples PTSD, Sexual Assault, Stress and Alcoholism would come under Mental Health. **Keep all your appointments.** This is important. When you go for your Comp and Pen hearing these weigh heavily on whether or not you will get your disability or increase.

Organize: Go through your military records and find anything to support your claim. Where, when, if medical any medical records then make copies of these records and place them in a folder. Go the records office where you've been being seen and ask for the records of the doctor who has been seeing you. You'll be asked for a reason, state for review and have the records mailed to you. Make copies and place them in the folder.

Where to Go: Once you have a history with the VA doctor and you have all your records organized you're ready to file. Most veteran's organizations will assist you in filing, however, vets will tell you the best organization to file through is the DAV. They will help you with the paperwork and take care of filing your claim to regional office. You want to express a desire to have a local board. This will give you a chance to go before the board and state your case. You will probably examined by another physician before the board makes a decision. Make sure that physician gets all the details of your case and doesn't brush you in and out. It may take up to a year before you get a decision, but you will be paid retro from the time you filed.