

STANDARD CLAIM VS FULLY DEVELOPED CLAIM

The same claim form and legal standard, with a different evidence-development path.



SAME FORM
VA Form 21-526EZ

SAME STANDARD
Entitlement rules do not change

KEY CHOICE
Who must still gather evidence?

READ FIRST

Standard and Fully Developed describe how evidence is developed. They do not describe the claim purpose and do not create different standards for deciding service connection or the rating.

SIDE BY SIDE

HOW THE TWO PATHS DIFFER

STANDARD CLAIM

Use when relevant evidence still needs to be requested or developed.

- Veteran identifies relevant records and provides releases.
- VA makes applicable Duty to Assist efforts.
- Additional evidence may be submitted while development continues.
- Record requests can add time when custodians respond slowly.

FULLY DEVELOPED CLAIM

Use when all available non-federal evidence is ready at filing.

- Veteran submits the evidence held and certifies no more is expected.
- VA still obtains relevant federal records and may order an examination.
- Later evidence can move the claim out of the FDC program.
- The FDC label does not create an automatic priority lane.

CHOOSE THE PATH

USE THE EVIDENCE STATUS, NOT A SPEED PROMISE

EVIDENCE STILL MISSING?

Choose the Standard path when relevant private records, federal records, authorizations, or other development remains outstanding.

Standard development

OR

PACKET COMPLETE?

Consider FDC when all available evidence in the claimant's possession is submitted and no additional non-federal evidence is expected.

FDC certification

BOTH PATHS

WHAT DOES NOT CHANGE



The claim purpose

Initial, increase, secondary, section 1151, and other purposes remain the same.



The evidence standard

The VA applies the same entitlement and rating rules.



The possibility of an examination

The VA may still request a C&P examination or medical opinion.



The need for accuracy

The condition, theory, forms, signatures, and evidence must still be correct.



The right to submit evidence

Submitting later evidence is allowed, though it may end FDC processing.

FDC EXIT POINTS

WHEN AN FDC CAN REVERT TO STANDARD

NEW

New evidence appears

Additional non-federal evidence is identified or submitted after the FDC certification.

MISS

Development is incomplete

The VA determines that more non-federal evidence or clarification is needed.

LANE

The procedural path changes

The claim enters a process that is not handled within the FDC program.

NO PRIORITY PROMISE

A complete file can avoid preventable record-request delay, but the FDC program no longer provides an automatic priority-processing benefit. No filing path guarantees a decision date.

