RATEMYVSO VISUAL GUIDE

# 1 PTSD CLAIM IN ONE PAGE

RESEARCH

A PTSD service-connection claim generally needs **all three elements** below. The evidence needed for the stressor depends on which legal pathway applies.

## 01 THE THREE THINGS YOU MUST PROVE

1

### CURRENT PTSD DIAGNOSIS

A current diagnosis that meets DSM-5 requirements.

38 CFR § 4.125(a)

2

### CREDIBLE IN-SERVICE STRESSOR

A qualifying traumatic event during military service.

38 CFR § 3.304(f)

3

### MEDICAL NEXUS

A qualified medical link between the diagnosis and the stressor.

"At least as likely as not"

**ALL THREE ELEMENTS MUST BE SUPPORTED.**
A verified stressor alone is not a complete PTSD claim.

## 02 WHICH STRESSOR PATHWAY APPLIES?

Not every PTSD claim requires the same corroborating evidence.

### COMBAT

Lay testimony may establish a consistent combat stressor.

### FEAR OF HOSTILE ACTIVITY

Special rule requires VA psychiatrist or psychologist confirmation.

### MST / PERSONAL ASSAULT

Alternative evidence and behavioral markers may corroborate the event.

### OTHER NON-COMBAT EVENT

Usually needs records or other evidence corroborating the event.

*Other regulatory paths also apply to PTSD diagnosed during service and former prisoners of war.*

## 03 BUILD THE RECORD AROUND THE MISSING ELEMENT

**D — DIAGNOSIS**
Mental-health evaluation, treatment notes, and the PTSD DBQ/C&P examination.

**S — STRESSOR**
Personnel or unit records, official reports, buddy statements, or qualifying markers.

**N — NEXUS**
A reasoned medical opinion connecting current PTSD to the identified event.

**I — IMPACT**
Accurate examples of symptom frequency, severity, duration, and occupational and social impairment.

## 04 BEFORE YOU FILE

- ✓ Current DSM-5 PTSD diagnosis documented
- ✓ Specific in-service stressor identified
- ✓ Correct stressor evidence pathway selected
- ✓ Medical nexus supported
- ✓ Treatment and medical records gathered
- ✓ Personal and relevant lay statements prepared
- ✓ Symptoms and functional impact described accurately
- ✓ File reviewed for completeness and consistency

**Do not shape your account around a chart.** Be accurate, specific, and consistent about your own history and symptoms.