



Follow the current VA disability claim stages, understand where delays and return loops can occur, and keep initial claim processing separate from a later Board appeal.

71.3

DAYS
VA AVERAGE FOR DISABILITY-RELATED CLAIMS

June 2026 snapshot. Your claim may take more or less time based on complexity, the number of issues, and evidence collection.

AVERAGE IS NOT A DEADLINE

The claim status tool does not provide an exact decision date.

BEFORE THE VA
TIMELINE BEGINS

PREPARE AND SUBMIT

Identify the claimed condition, gather relevant evidence, and keep a complete copy of the submission. Starting an online application may establish an effective date before final submission.

- ✓ Current PTSD diagnosis
- ✓ Relevant records and statements
- ✓ In-service stressor identified
- ✓ Medical link and current impairment

INITIAL DISABILITY CLAIM

VA’S CURRENT 8-STAGE PROCESS

Stages can move forward or return to evidence gathering. A status change alone does not predict whether VA will grant or deny the claim.

1

STAGE 1

CLAIM RECEIVED

VA confirms receipt. Online submissions receive an on-screen message; mailed claims require processing and mailing time.

YOUR MOVE

Save the confirmation and a complete copy of the claim.

2

STAGE 2

INITIAL REVIEW

VA checks for basic information needed to process the claim. VA will contact you if required information is missing.

YOUR MOVE

Watch for requests and keep contact information current.

3

STAGE 3

EVIDENCE GATHERING

VA may request records, ask you for evidence, gather federal records, or schedule a claim examination. VA says this is usually the longest stage.

YOUR MOVE

Respond by the stated date and attend scheduled examinations.

4

STAGE 4

EVIDENCE REVIEW

VA reviews the collected record. New or missing evidence can send the claim back to Stage 3.

COMMON LOOP

Stage 4 can return to Stage 3 without indicating a negative outcome.

5

STAGE 5

RATING

VA decides the claim and determines any disability evaluation. Additional development can still return the claim to Stage 3.

REMEMBER

The displayed status does not reveal the result before the letter is available.

6

STAGE 6

PREPARING DECISION LETTER

VA prepares the written decision. If benefits are awarded, the letter explains the rating, payment amount, and payment start date.

YOUR MOVE

Continue monitoring the official claim status tool.

7

STAGE 7

FINAL REVIEW

A senior reviewer completes a final review of the claim and decision letter.

STILL PENDING

The claim is not complete until VA marks it decided.

8

STAGE 8

CLAIM DECIDED

The decision letter becomes available in the claim status tool. VA also mails a copy, which it says should generally arrive within 10 business days.

YOUR MOVE

Read the reasons, rating, effective date, and review options in the letter.

AFTER THE DECISION

REVIEW THE LETTER,
NOT JUST THE STATUS

GRANTED

Check the evaluation, effective date, and payment details.

DEFERRED

VA has not finished deciding every issue. More development may follow.

DENIED OR DISPUTED

Use the stated reasons and review options to decide what comes next.

SEPARATE PROCESS

A BOARD APPEAL IS NOT PART OF THE 8-STAGE INITIAL CLAIM TIMELINE

RateMyVSO’s historical BVA data measures a different population and a later part of the benefits process.

HISTORICAL MEDIAN

22.0 MONTHS

25th to 75th percentile: 10.1 to 39.8 months

N = 41,638 BOARD DECISIONS

PTSD diagnostic code 9411. Historical published BVA decisions with usable timing data through September 2026. This is not an estimate for a new initial claim.

KEEP THE TIMELINES STRAIGHT. The VA claim average, your individual claim, a decision review, and a Board appeal are different measurements. None of these figures predicts the outcome of a specific claim.

