



USE THIS AS A GAP CHECK, NOT A GUARANTEE

Mark what is already in the file. An unchecked box identifies evidence to review, not an automatic reason to delay filing.

☒ Ready

☐ Review

01

FOUNDATION

CONFIRM THE CURRENT DISABILITY

OSA

☐ **Sleep study is in the file**

Polysomnography or a validated home sleep apnea test

☐ **Diagnosis and apnea type are documented**

Obstructive, central, or mixed sleep apnea

☐ **AHI and oxygen findings are available**

Include the complete report, not only a summary note

☐ **Current treatment records are included**

CPAP or BiPAP prescription, settings, follow-up, and adherence when available

CHECKPOINT: A diagnosis proves the condition exists. It does not establish service connection by itself.

02

LEGAL THEORY

IDENTIFY THE PATHWAY YOU ARE CLAIMING

PATH

☐ **DIRECT**

Sleep apnea began in service or is linked to an in-service event, injury, disease, or exposure.

☐ **SECONDARY CAUSATION**

An already service-connected condition caused the sleep apnea.

☐ **SECONDARY AGGRAVATION**

An already service-connected condition made the sleep apnea worse.

☐ **OBESITY INTERMEDIATE STEP**

A service-connected condition caused or aggravated obesity, which then caused sleep apnea.

☐ **The claimed pathway is named consistently**

Use the same theory in the application, personal statement, and medical opinion

☐ **The timeline supports the selected theory**

Dates of service, diagnoses, medications, symptoms, and weight changes are reconciled

03

MEDICAL LINK

MAKE THE NEXUS OPINION DO REAL WORK

LINK

☐ **The provider reviewed the relevant records**

The opinion identifies the sleep study, treatment history, and primary-condition evidence

☐ **The opinion explains how the connection works**

It gives a reasoned medical mechanism, not only a conclusion

☐ **Causation and aggravation are addressed separately**

An opinion answering only one question can leave the other theory undeveloped

☐ **Competing risk factors are discussed**

Age, anatomy, BMI, family history, smoking, medications, and other relevant factors

☐ **Literature is applied to this medical history**

General articles alone do not explain why the relationship exists in an individual case

04

SUPPORTING RECORD

ASSEMBLE THE TIMELINE AND OBSERVATIONS

FILE

☐ **Service treatment and personnel records**

Sleep complaints, fatigue, headaches, duty changes, exposures, or relevant events

☐ **Medical treatment records**

Primary care, sleep medicine, ENT, pulmonary, mental health, and medication history

☐ **Weight history when relevant**

Dates, treatment effects, physical limitations, and the claimed intermediate link

☐ **Personal statement**

Onset, progression, treatment, functional impact, and a consistent chronology

☐ **Witness or buddy statements**

First-hand observations of snoring, choking, gasping, or stopped breathing

☐ **Prior VA decisions and examinations**

Identify what VA accepted, disputed, overlooked, or found inadequate

LAY EVIDENCE HAS A ROLE: Witnesses can describe what they observed. A medical professional generally must explain what caused the sleep apnea.

05

SUBMISSION AND EXAM

REVIEW THE FILE BEFORE IT LEAVES YOUR HANDS

GO

☐ **Names, dates, and onset statements are consistent**

Resolve conflicts before they become the focus of an examiner's opinion

☐ **Every referenced document is actually attached or obtainable**

Do not assume a private sleep study or nexus letter is already in the VA file

☐ **The claimed condition and theory are stated clearly**

For example: sleep apnea secondary to a named service-connected condition

☐ **C&P exam preparation is complete**

Know the timeline, medications, treatment, device use, and functional effects without exaggeration

☐ **Prior denial is answered with new and relevant evidence**

For a Supplemental Claim, address the specific missing element instead of repeating the old file

FINAL REVIEW

CAN SOMEONE NEW TO THE FILE ANSWER THESE THREE QUESTIONS?

1 WHAT IS THE CURRENT DIAGNOSIS?

2 WHICH SERVICE-CONNECTION PATH APPLIES?

3 WHAT MEDICAL EVIDENCE EXPLAINS THE LINK?

If any answer is unclear, that is the part of the record to review.