



Continue

Sample buddy letter for ptsd

Whether you're a friend, relative, military buddy, co-worker, supervisor, teacher, coach, or spiritual leader, you're likely to have an idea of how the veteran's life has been affected by military service. Traumatic experiences in the military can bring about profound changes. It's not unusual for a man or woman to enter the service as one person and emerge as someone markedly different. PTSD can turn a friendly, outgoing person into a withdrawn loner.

Page 2
July 2, 2010

returning from bombing H. Phong Harbor in Hanoi. one instance I remember a downed pilot we were in radio contact with was surrounded by viet cong NAV Troops who trapped and shot down 3 rescue helicopters we sent in, killing all crew members and finally killing the pilot they were trying to rescue. The cries of screaming & blood curdling bellowing and pandemonium during that rescue attempt haunted me and our squadron mates causing many sleepless nights sweating and nightmarish to this day and can never be forgotten. These events caused crews to be continually on the edge. At my time, any crew member could be confused, excited, agitated or filled with anxiety and fear all at the same time. It was during these times that we had to guard each other back that I became good friends with Richard Raymond Rowan, the Pilot from B-52s until 12 Dec 66 on many combat missions together, each being awarded the RIB MEDAL. Richard proved to be very responsible, trustworthy, extremely knowledgable and dependable. I would trust that my life would be safe in the hands of Richard and I would reciprocate in the same manner. In war times, this was a valued relationship.

While back on Guam between combat and weather missions, one of our duties was to keep the airfield runway clear of debris that could damage the aircraft upon take off or landing, leading to more serious catastrophe. This duty was called F.O.D. (Foreign objects & debris) pick-up. Richard and I and the other crew members would line up across the runway at arms

It can turn a calm, easygoing person into a powder keg. It can turn an active person into someone who's afraid to leave the house. It can turn a productive worker into a problem employee. It can turn a devoted husband or wife into a spouse who's moody and distant, or even abusive. It can turn a devoted parent into an absent father or mother. If you've known the veteran before and after military service, you're in a position to describe the changes you've seen. Even if you've only known the veteran since his or her military service ended, you can still help. A letter describing what you've observed can go a long way toward educating the VA about the severity of the veteran's PTSD symptoms. If possible, describe the veteran's PTSD symptoms in detail, giving specific examples. Does the veteran panic when a helicopter flies overhead or a firecracker goes off? Is the veteran constantly on guard, checking to make certain that all the doors and windows in the family home are locked? At a restaurant, does the veteran insist on taking a seat facing the exit, to make sure there's an escape route? Does the veteran often wake up from nightmares, shaking and crying out in terror? Let the facts speak for themselves. Write down what you've seen and heard, as completely and accurately as you can. There's no need to exaggerate, and no need to worry about telling the whole truth.

Tips for Your VA Buddy Letter

1. Ensure that the buddy letter is from someone credible and competent
2. Be sure to sign and date the buddy letter
3. Be concise
4. Include contact information
5. Include identifying information
6. Certify the buddy letter

Without the veteran's specific written permission, only the VA, the veteran, and the veteran's representative or attorney will be able to read what you write. If possible, type your letter on a computer; otherwise, please make certain your handwriting is legible. Give the veteran's full name. Indicate your relationship to the veteran. State how long you've known the veteran, and how often you've seen him or her. (The more often you've seen the veteran, the more weight your opinion is likely to carry. Of course, it can also be significant if you're now seeing the veteran less often than you did before his or her service, particularly if PTSD is the reason.) End your letter with this declaration: I certify under penalty of perjury that the foregoing statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. Sign and date the letter, and include your full name and address. You've eye-witnessed the harm that PTSD has caused. You now have an opportunity to help the veteran return to a stable and productive life. We hope you'll take advantage of it. Writing a letter can make a difference in the life of someone you care about. Disclaimer: This memorandum provides general information only. It does not constitute legal advice, nor does it substitute for the advice of an expert representative or attorney who knows the particulars of your case. Any use you make of the information in this memorandum is at your own risk. We have made every effort to provide reliable, up-to-date information, but we do not guarantee its accuracy.

The information in this memorandum is current as of December 2012. © Copyright Swords to Plowshares 2016. These materials are the property of Swords to Plowshares and are made available at no charge. For parties interested in using or distributing these materials, please note that no alterations are permitted and proper attribution must be given to Swords to Plowshares. Posted by Berry Law on March 8, 2023 in Buddy Statement. When you make a claim through the VA, there are several ways you can give evidence to further your claim. Some are more obvious, such as medical records, service records, and a professional medical opinion. However, some are not as obvious, such as buddy statements, which can help further prove your disability. You can use buddy statements to help get a VA disability rating or increase it if necessary. Fellow service members, friends, or even family members can write them. For a buddy statement to be substantial, there is a lot of different information a writer can and should include, which we will go over in this article.

We will also go over how friends or family members can write a good buddy statement so the VA will consider it with your claim. What is a Buddy Statement?



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Benefits Administration
Washington, D.C. 20420

November 15, 2010

Director (00/21)
All VA Regional Offices

In Reply Refer To: 211B
Training Letter 10-05 (Revised)

SUBJECT: Relaxation of Evidentiary Standard for Establishing In-Service Stressors in Claims for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder – 38 CFR § 3.304(f)(3)

Revision

This training letter is revised to add additional "frequently asked questions" to Attachment C. A new attachment (Attachment D) provides the proper language to use in development and Veterans Claims Assistance Act (VCAA) notice letters based on the amendment to 38 CFR § 3.304(f).

Background

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has amended its rules for adjudicating disability compensation claims for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) contained at 38 CFR 3.304(f). The new regulation streamlines the standard for establishing an in-service stressor in certain cases. This revision adds to the types of claims in which VA will accept credible lay testimony alone as being sufficient to establish occurrence of an in-service stressor without undertaking other development. VA's specific PTSD regulation, § 3.304(f), previously authorized VA to only accept statements from Veterans who served in combat as sufficient to establish the occurrence of the claimed in-service stressor. VA later amended its PTSD regulations to also accept the statements of Veterans who are former prisoners of war and those with an in-service diagnosis of PTSD as sufficient to establish occurrence of an in-service stressor if they are consistent with the places, types, and circumstances of service.

The primary result of the amendment of 38 CFR § 3.304(f) is the elimination of the requirement for corroborating evidence of the claimed in-service stressor if it is related to the Veteran's "fear of hostile military or terrorist activity." The new regulation requires that: (1) A VA psychiatrist or psychologist, or contract equivalent, must confirm that the claimed stressor is adequate to support a diagnosis of PTSD; (2) the claimed stressor is consistent with the places, types, and circumstances of the Veteran's service; and (3) the Veteran's symptoms are related to the claimed stressor. The regulatory amendment has no impact on PTSD claims that arise out of in-service diagnoses of PTSD, interment as a prisoner of war, or as the result of personal assault.

A buddy statement is a statement written by an individual who has knowledge of the Veteran's injury, illness, or in-service event. They can be written by family members, friends, or fellow service members—essentially anyone close to the Veteran that has insight into their disability. Buddy statements are important pieces of evidence since they back up a Veteran's claim. In some scenarios, records are lost, destroyed, or altogether non-existent. In cases like these, where additional evidence is required, buddy statements prove to be a powerful asset for the Veteran. The VA is required to consider all evidence, including buddy statements. The VA uses this information when granting or denying service connection. Further, this information can be used for the purposes of assigning an appropriate disability rating. A buddy statement can be written in any way that is convenient for the person writing the statement. The best form to use for lay statements is a VAF 21-10210. This form allows a place for the witness to leave their contact information and specify their relationship with the Veteran. The form has a section called "Statement," in which an individual can include information they feel is relevant to their disability benefits claim. When you submit a buddy statement, be sure to include all contact information for the "buddy" in question. The VA likes to double and triple-check records, so they need to be able to contact the person who allegedly gave the buddy statement. When you fill out the form, you swear that the content is 100% true.

Therefore, you should double-check the details of a buddy statement with the person who wrote the statement to make sure you don't leave anything out or represent anything inaccurately. You can submit buddy statements as notarized documents for extra legitimacy. As touched on above, anyone who has witnessed or experienced with a Veteran's disability may submit a buddy statement. Therefore, buddy statements can come from: Family members, including spouses; Close friends; Fellow Veterans or servicemembers; Coworkers; and more. However, the person submitting the buddy statement to the VA should focus on certain points to be effective. The better the buddy statement, the more likely you can get the rating you need. The actual contents of the statement should focus on the issue the Veteran is trying to prove whether that be the incident that caused or aggravated the Veteran's disability, the presence of the disability, the severity of the disability, and so on. Someone who has served with the Veteran will often write the buddy statement, especially if they were present for the specific event that caused or aggravated the current condition. In some cases, such as PTSD or Agent Orange, buddy statements are useful, since in these cases, it is hard to pinpoint one specific moment that may have caused or aggravated a disability. However, if the focus of the buddy statement is on an increased rating, rather than trying to get an initial benefit, the statement should focus on how the disability has worsened over time and how the disability affects the Veteran's daily life. It can also describe how the disability has affected those close to the Veteran since it usually takes many people to aid a person who is severely disabled. In these cases, buddy statements more often come from family and friends since they are caring for the Veteran. These statements will be crucial for increasing the rating that the Veteran has. Once the buddy statement is submitted, sometimes, the Veteran is scheduled for a Compensation and Pension examination, which looks over a day of the Veteran's life to see how their condition has affected them and the people that care for them. There is no one right time to submit a buddy statement because different buddy statements are used for different reasons. Some are used for the initial claim, while others are used for increased ratings. In general, it never hurts to have a buddy statement. Even if you have all of the other necessary records for your claim, a buddy statement will only help support your claim. If you have it ahead of time, it can help the VA make a better initial judgment about what kind of rating and benefits you should get. Should You Structure a Buddy Statement in a Certain Way? There should be a certain structure to your buddy statement. When someone writes a buddy statement, they should state who they are, their contact information, and their relationship to the Veteran.

This is why it is best if the VAF 21-10210 is used because that information is requested on the form itself. Additionally, if the buddy served with the Veteran in the military, they should put where and when they served. After introducing who they are, the writer should address the issue they were asked to address. If the statement is submitted to support that an in-service event occurred they should describe the event that caused or aggravated the Veteran's current disability. This is especially important if the person writing the buddy statement served with the Veteran in the military. If they are describing the current condition, they should detail how it has progressed over time or the current level of disability they witnessed. Then, the person should write their signature and date the document to be considered by the VA. The person should also acknowledge that all the information provided is accurate to their knowledge. There should be no false information in the document. This is not a requirement, but the buddy statement will be more persuasive and given more weight if it is signed, dated, and acknowledged. It is also possible to get your buddy statements notarized to have additional weight assigned to the document. Tips for Writing a Buddy Statement A buddy statement should be clear and concise, and certain people are better to reach out to depending on what the buddy statement is focusing on. For example, if you, as a Veteran, suffered from a fall during your time in the military, the best person to write a buddy statement would probably not be your spouse because they were not there to witness the fall.

I served my country for 6 years. I was sexually assaulted by another sailor in the navy while on shore leave in the Philippines in 1998. I didn't have anywhere to turn to and tell someone, but when I left the navy in 1999, I had difficulty readjusting. I didn't get along with workers and supervisors and went through two divorces. I also had to reduce my coursework in college before dropping out in 2008 due to stress. I was experiencing panic attacks two or three times a month. I had trouble meeting rent and I got caught up with alcohol. This affected my ability to focus on my goals. Today, I have severe anxiety and depression. I still have trouble forming productive relationships, from social and professional perspectives. To this day, I check and re-check my doors to make sure they're locked, sometimes waking up in the middle of the night to make sure all the doors and windows were closed. The VA should grant me benefits!

Instead, the best person to reach out would be a fellow service member who witnessed the fall. In these scenarios, you want eyewitness accounts so that the VA will consider your claim all the way through. However, if your claim focuses on an increased rating, a family member or friend may be the best person to write a buddy statement. These people see how your symptoms have affected your everyday life. Most people who served alongside a Veteran in the military will not witness how the disability has affected their life in the long run. This is why it is important to have an eyewitness account of how the disability caused or aggravated further issues over time from someone with the Veteran daily. Employees and coworkers can also write effective buddy statements. Many Veterans try to get a total disability rating since they cannot keep a job due to their disability. In this instance, a buddy statement from a coworker that sees how the Veteran's disability has affected their ability to work can be powerful evidence towards a total disability rating. Overall, it is best to have the appropriate person write up the buddy statement for the appropriate situation and always check your work and formatting. Every instance in a VA claim is different. Effective Buddy Statement Example In many cases, a well-written buddy statement can be the difference between a service connection grant or a denial, especially if a Veteran has an injury or disability diagnosis from a medical doctor but nothing in their service treatment record. Given this importance, let's take a look at a well-written buddy statement that includes a good amount of specifics: "We were on deployment in Baghdad, Iraq, in 2018. During routine duties, and I was required to carry heavy crates down several flights of stairs. As we carried out this task, suffered a sprain to their ankle. Because we needed to complete the work rapidly, we carried on without looking at the ankle. However, ankle quickly became worse. I saw it become swollen, purple, and bruised-looking in a matter of hours. Because we had a lot of work to do, we did not have the opportunity to rest or have it looked at by a medical professional. Ever since, has not walked the same way and has complained about physical pain and lack of mobility in the affected ankle. He has mentioned the discomfort and pain repeatedly since this incident, so I believe it is directly connected to his current issues. Remember, a buddy statement doesn't have to be very long. However, it has to describe the disabled Veteran's initial injury and link it to the current diagnosis or symptoms. Conclusion: Buddy statements are an important tool when trying to acquire benefits through the VA by trying to increase the rating that they already have. It is best to reach out to people who know the situation the best so that they can provide the most detail when writing the buddy statement. If you have any questions regarding VA benefits, please visit our website for more information. Sources: About VA Form 21-4138 | Veterans Affairs How To Write A VA Buddy Letter | Military Benefits Psychiatry.org - What Is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)? | Psychiatry Category: Veterans Disability Law When a veteran develops a disability or condition as a result of their military service, they may be eligible for VA disability compensation. To receive the correct amount of benefits, the veteran must report their disability as accurately and honestly as possible. One way to support the effects of a disability is to have a friend, relative, peer, or fellow service member draft a statement supporting what the veteran tells their claim adjudicator. These buddy letters can help a veteran build a solid case even when they may be lacking certain medical records or evidence of the true effects a disability has had on their daily life. What is a VA Buddy Letter? VA buddy letters—also called buddy statements, lay statements, or lay evidence—are statements

COVER LETTER

FOR THE

AID AND ATTENDANCE

PENSION BENEFIT

www.VeteranAid.org

Writing a VA Buddy Letter There are many different ways to go about writing a VA buddy letter, but the information included must be relatively similar for all of them. In general, the structure of a buddy statement is broken down into four separate sections. Each section covers a different aspect of the case and helps to fill in the missing pieces in a disability claim. Identification and Relationship Information The first section is meant to set the scene for the rest of the letter. The writer will introduce themselves by providing their name, contact information, and their relationship to the veteran. You should include how frequently you see or speak with the veteran, how long you've known one another, how you met, and any other relevant information about your relationship. Also, introduce and state the name of the veteran you are writing the VA buddy letter for. Descriptions of the Situation or Witnessed Events This is the section where you explain all of the changes you witnessed in the veteran's behavior or personality. Give a comprehensive description of how the veteran acted prior to the event or disability in question, then explain how they act now. Mention health issues, personality traits, and other relevant information that may have been affected or changed by the presence of the disability in question. Point out any differences you've seen in their social or work life as a result of their newfound condition(s). If you served with the veteran and they are also using your buddy letter to corroborate an in-service stressor, include any details about that stressor in the lay statement. This could include the unit and location to which you were both assigned or the exact happenings of the in-service event. Talk about when, where, and how it happened, and the changes that it made to the veteran's behavior and personality. Current Symptoms Being Experienced by the Veteran Along with the changes caused by the disability, any knowledge you have about the current symptoms the veteran is experiencing should be included in this section. This section goes into detail about any pain or issues the veteran has experienced after the event took place. Any opinion or insight on how the veteran's new disability has affected their life can be crucial in creating a solid case for VA disability compensation. These observations should be as specific as possible, including the exact tasks that may have become more difficult after the onset of the disability. Buddy Letter Certification and Signature The most routine section, the end of the letter, is where you will put your name, date, and the phrase "I certify that the statements in this form are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief." If the statement is not signed, it will not even be considered by VA. The signature serves as a certification that everything on the VA buddy letter form is as accurate as possible according to the author and that they give permission to use it in the veteran's claim. After the buddy letter is signed, the author may submit the lay evidence with the rest of their documents to VA for review. Submitting a VA Lay Statement There is no singular required process for submitting a VA buddy statement.

There is not one specific VA buddy letter form that must be submitted in order for VA to accept it. VA would be required to accept a handwritten letter if that's what was properly submitted. Regardless of how you'd like to turn in your buddy letter, there shouldn't be any problem as long as you follow the general guidelines of what to include. That being said, there are some forms that VA has created to make it easier for the individual providing a buddy letter.

One of the forms an author can use to provide a statement is VA Form 21-4138, Statement in Support of a Claim. This form has predetermined sections for information such as the veteran's identification, the body content of the statement, and the author's date and signature.

As of early 2021, VA Form 21-4138 was replaced with five other forms that have more specific functions. The form that deals primarily with the buddy letter aspect is VA Form 21-10210, Lay/Witness Statement. This form is used to submit a formal statement, including lay evidence, in support of a veteran's VA disability claim. Veterans can include multiple buddy statements in a single claim submitted by multiple people. However, the veteran should ensure that each lay statement is submitted on a separate VA Form 21-4138. Who Needs a VA Buddy Statement? A VA buddy letter can supplement a variety of different claim types. Any conditions affecting your physical or mental state and behaviors can benefit from the opinion of a buddy. While it might be beneficial to have a certain physical disability in this type of statement—it's very useful when the symptoms of a condition are not visible at a doctor's appointment. For example, when proving service connection for tinnitus, the only thing a veteran has is their word. Evidence of frequent complaints surrounding tinnitus could contribute to the veteran receiving compensation. Collecting and submitting lay evidence is part of filing a VA fully developed claim. Who Can Write the Buddy Letter? Any individual 18 years old or older who knows the veteran and can be considered a legitimate witness to the veteran's condition can write a VA buddy letter. Some of the more common sources of buddy letters include the following: The veteran's spouse A fellow service member A friend of the veteran Close or immediate relatives An adult child of the veteran A mentor, teacher, or pastor Sometimes a veteran may have difficulty tracking down another service member who can write them a formidable buddy statement. Luckily, local veteran service organizations have resources prepared to help veterans in need find each other.

If you are looking for a fellow service member to write you a buddy letter, start by reaching out to resources near you. What Types of Buddy Letters Are There? VA disability claims can be made for a variety of different conditions and reasons. Depending on what it is you are trying to prove in your claim, there are two main types of VA buddy letters. Co-Worker Buddy Letters These buddy statements come from other military personnel who served alongside you. The author should have a concrete understanding of who you are and be familiar with your service. This service member should also have witnessed the event or factors which caused your disability or worsened the effects of a pre-existing disability. Other veterans are also capable of explaining any changes in behavior or work performance you showed after the event or injury in question. These types of buddy letters are often used when there was a change that occurred at a specific time as a result of a specific event. Individuals who actually witnessed what happened and saw how it affected you can have a serious impact on the power of your VA disability claim. Friend or Family Member Buddy Letters These buddy statements typically come from individuals who are not involved in military service that knew you before and after you spent time in the military. This type of letter will usually focus on the difference in personality or behavior before and after the onset of the condition. These letters are used more for cases in which the disability continues to develop or worsen over time. A spouse, child, relative, or friend, who remembers you a certain way can certainly attest to any major changes in your personality upon return. Details about the negative impacts of a disability on your life can help you receive the VA disability compensation you are entitled to receive. What Should Be Included in a Lay Statement? VA buddy letters often follow the same format, however, the most important part about them is the information that is included. Some of the information that should be included as lay evidence includes the following: Who was involved in the accident A description of what and how it happened The location the accident occurred The date and time of the accident, if possible A comparison of the claimant's behavior before and after the accident occurred Details of how the veteran was impacted by the event Any treatment that was required as a result of the accident Changes in physical or mental health as a result of the injury Aside from the content, the general rules surrounding a buddy letter include the following: Contact information, identification, and signature of the author must be included to certify the evidence. The letter should preferably be kept to one page or less While a VA buddy letter has the potential to greatly strengthen a VA disability claim, it can also be completely useless if not done correctly. Pertinent information must be included while meeting the proper requirements for VA consideration. VA Buddy Letter Example Below is an example of a buddy letter for veteran John Doe written by family member Jane Doe on the topic of his service-connected PTSD. The statement is broken down into four sections for your convenience. When writing your own VA buddy letter, you would not need to include the numbering. To Whom It May Concern: My name is Jane Doe, I am the brother of veteran John Doe, and am writing this letter on John Doe's behalf. John Doe and I grew up together and although we no longer live in the same town, I still see him at least twice a month on family outings and other visits. John served in the United States Naval Forces from March 15, 2003, until June 5, 2007, including overseas in Iraq and Afghanistan. My brother John was a very happy-go-lucky guy who could always make anybody in the room smile. He enjoyed going to sporting events, hiking, and playing football with his friends whenever he had time. We stayed in constant communication during his time overseas, as we have always been close. Towards the beginning of his third year, in early 2005, his letters began to change dramatically. I asked him if anything had changed and he told me that he had witnessed the death of a close friend. He continued to dodge questions, so I reached out to the wife of one of his friends in the service. She explained to me that their squad had been moving bases when one of their vehicles hit a road mine. My brother was in the vehicle that exploded and although he survived, many of those surrounding him were killed upon impact by shrapnel from the explosion. When I wrote to him to confirm this, he agreed that it had happened, but would not give any further details. After he finished his four years of service, John returned back to the state we grew up in and moved in with our parents. He took no interest in playing football, seeing his friends, or going to sporting events. While he still took short walks on the property late at night and early in the morning, to my knowledge, he has yet to go on a hike away from home since returning from overseas. He is very commanding and rude to our parents, even though they take care of him constantly. While I thought that he was going to be a wonderful uncle to my kids when he returned, I have stopped bringing them when I visit because he seems disconnected and paranoid. Lately, he has begun drinking heavily and threatening our parents to buy him more alcohol. They informed me that they were going to call the police to kick him out of their home. Upon confrontation with law enforcement, John was physically detained and brought into the hospital on suspicion of severe mental illness. After weeks of working with the in-house psychiatrist, he was able to admit that he had developed post-traumatic stress disorder from the explosion that killed part of his squadron. My parents decided to continue caring for him, so long as he continues treatment. While John takes extra care to avoid additional stressors such as overstimulation, alcohol, and other triggers, he still has difficulty leaving my parents' home and he is not even close to the same man that he used to be. He is unable to get jobs due to his limitations and cannot find joy in doing anything that used to bring him joy in the past. I believe that my brother has been forever altered by his service-connected mental illness. I, Jane Doe, declare under penalty of perjury pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746(2) that the above information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Jane Doe

Date Contact Tuley Law Office for Help Writing a VA Buddy Letter Whether you are seeking an individual to write a buddy letter for your VA disability claim or you have been called upon to write one for someone else, it can be beneficial to seek legal advice. Different information can be more important depending on the details of the case which VA is already familiar with. Reach out to our attorneys today if you have questions about the VA Buddy Letter. We look forward to hearing from you! Have questions about your case? Contact