



## Warriors of War - VA Claim Mission-Ready Checklist

### From the Desk of Your FMF Doc & Veteran Coach

"I took care of you in the field; my mission now is to ensure you have the tools to navigate the VA. This checklist is your starting point. It's designed to get you and your evidence organized *before* you file, so you can build the strongest claim possible. Let's get you mission-ready."

**Disclaimer:** This checklist is an educational tool to help you prepare your claim. It does not constitute legal or medical advice. I am operating as a coach and educator, not an accredited VSO or attorney, and cannot file a claim on your behalf.

### Phase 1: Gather Your Intel (Personal & Service Information)

- [ ] **DD-214 (Member-4 Copy):** The cornerstone of your claim. Request from the National Archives if missing.
- [ ] **Personal Information:** Full name, SSN, current address, and direct deposit banking info.
- [ ] **Marriage/Divorce Decrees & Birth Certificates:** Required if claiming dependents.

### Phase 2: Assemble Your Evidence (The Medical Proof)

- [ ] **Service Treatment Records (STRs):** All your military medical records.  
***Doc's Note:** Don't forget sick call slips, dental records, and mental health encounters. Every record is a potential piece of evidence.*
- [ ] **VA Medical Records:** If treated at a VA facility for the conditions you are claiming.
- [ ] **Private Medical Records:** From any civilian doctors, chiropractors, or specialists seen since service.

**Doc's Note:** *You must show a continuous history of treatment. If there are gaps, be prepared to explain why.*

- ☐ **Nexus Letter (if needed):** A letter from a private medical professional explicitly linking your condition to your service.

**Doc's Note:** *This is a powerful tool for conditions diagnosed years after service. It helps the VA "connect the dots."*

- ☐ **Medical Bills:** Copies of bills or receipts for any out-of-pocket medical expenses.

### Phase 3: Tell Your Story (Supporting Documents)

- ☐ **Personal Statement (VA Form 21-4138):** Your detailed account of the condition and its impact on your life.

**Doc's Note:** *Write it like you're telling me what happened. Be honest, be detailed. Explain your "bad days." This is your testimony.*

- ☐ **Buddy Letters / Lay Statements (VA Form 21-10210):** Written statements from people who can corroborate your story (spouse, family, fellow Marines, etc.).
- ☐ **Photos, Service Medals, or Performance Reports:** Anything that can help prove a combat or hazardous duty event.

### Phase 4: Final Review & Submission

- ☐ **Review Everything:** Is every document legible? Does your story make sense and remain consistent?
- ☐ **Ready to File:** File online at VA.gov, by mail, or with the help of an accredited VSO.

**Doc's Note:** *Filing an "Intent to File" on VA.gov as soon as you start this process can secure your effective date, potentially resulting in more back pay once approved. You have one year to submit the full claim.*