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Buddy letter for va example

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What Is a VA Buddy Letter?A buddy statement is a kind of evidence that you can submit with your claim for disability compensation through the VA. VA buddy statements typically serve two main purposes, both of which add credibility and context to your claim. First, buddy statements can provide a witness account of your injury or stressor.

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APPELLATE DIVISION

FEB 03 2004

SUPERIOR COURT
OF NEW JERSEY

29 January 2004

Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex
PO Box 006
Appellate Division/ Ms. Nancy E. Laux/ Team 2
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0006

Re: Superior Court of New Jersey
Appellate Division Docket #A-0015-3-03T2
Cunningham vs. Maynard and Truland

Dear Ms. Laux:

Mr. John ("Jack") Cunningham requested that I write this letter in support of the effect his symptoms have upon his ability to function. I am a clinical psychologist, with a specialty in posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Mr. Cunningham was treated by me for several years, while I was employed by the Department of Veterans Affairs as a psychologist treating veterans with PTSD.

His diagnosis is well-documented; my attempt herein is to spell out the impact of this mental disorder, particularly as it impairs one's ability to function on a high and competent level. The effect of this syndrome usually severely compromise the individual's ability to maintain concentration and attention to detail. In light of this factor, and Mr. Cunningham's history, it is impressive to note what he has been able to accomplish *viz-a-viz* this lawsuit.

Posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms often ebb and flux, triggered by various stimuli in the environment. Mr. Cunningham has been an avid monitor of world news, and all the reporting of both Iraq and Afghanistan have triggered his full array of symptoms. When he experiences these types of reactions, his ability to function is severely limited, and would reflect in errors of both commission and omission, any attempt he made to create and edit any detailed documentation, let alone a highly technical series of legal documents.

My hope is that this information may prove helpful in Mr. Cunningham's case. Thank you for your attention.

Laurence Kolman, PhD
American College of Forensic Examiners:
Fellow Board Certified Forensic Examiner
American Board of Disability Analysts:
Senior Disability Analyst and Fellow
American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress:
Fellow, Board Certified Expert in Traumatic Stress

Witness accounts typically come from a fellow Veteran that you served with or was assigned to the same station you were. Buddy statements from fellow Veterans can be exceptionally helpful for your claim, as they can help verify information that may not be accounted for in your medical records or other official documents. This was done successfully in the case of Kenneth Haselwander; he received buddy statements that verified he was injured in an attack on his camp in Vietnam, which wasn't reflected in his medical record. These buddy statements helped Mr. Haselwander have his military records changed, making him eligible for the Purple Heart medal. Secondly, VA buddy statements can be submitted by civilians who have first-hand knowledge of your injury or stressor, and have seen how it impacts your daily life. These can come from people like friends, family members, spouses, employers, and many other people. They can provide context on how your injuries have impacted your daily life. For example, in a case with a survivor of military sexual trauma, buddy statements from her family illustrated how the Veteran changed and became withdrawn following the sexual assault she suffered during her service, and how that impacted her daily life and relationships. Neighbors and coworkers can be powerful pieces of evidence, particularly when there are gaps or incomplete periods in a Veteran's medical records. However, for the statement to be as effective as possible, it should follow these tips: Tips for Writing a VA Buddy Letter To craft the most persuasive and effective VA buddy statement, it's important to remember that the following establish the relationship: The buddy letter should establish the relationship between you and the author of the letter. This includes details such as the author's name, their dates of service, and where the two of you served together if they are a Veteran, and details like how the author knows you and how long they've known you if they're a civilian. Additionally, it should clearly identify you. If the buddy letter comes from a Veteran you served with, they may have a nickname for you. However, they should be sure to refer to you by your legal name. Focus On The Details A buddy letter should focus on the details of the injury or stressor, specifically, the who, what, when, and where, and why or how of the incident.

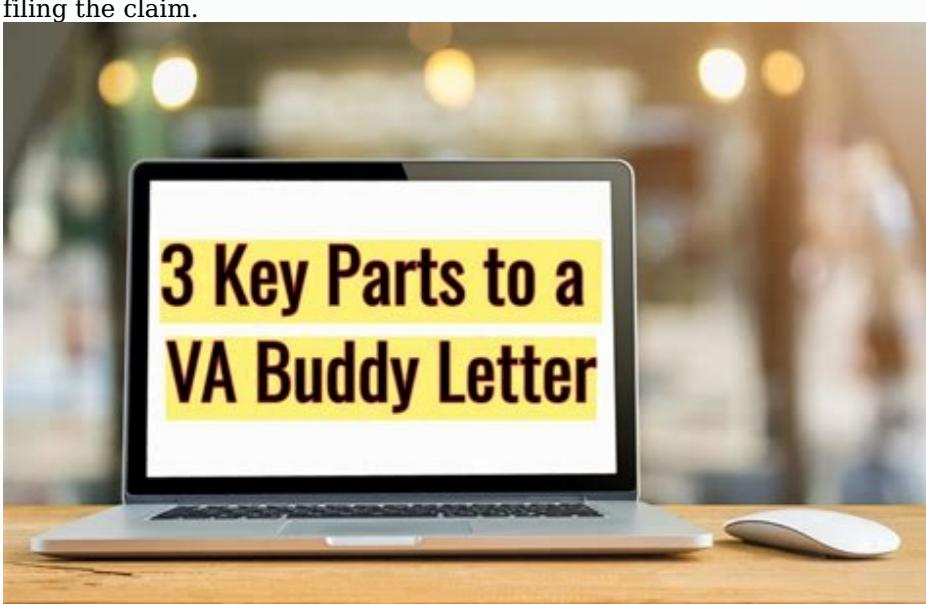
Additionally, it's important that the buddy letter juxtaposes your health, ability, or behavior before the injury or stressor to what you experienced after it. This will highlight how it has impacted your relationships, or your ability to work and perform daily activities. Avoid Speculation When writing a buddy letter, your reference should stick to the facts. If they can't remember something, that's fine, but speculation could cast doubt on your claim and make it weaker. Avoid statements that exaggerate or diminish the severity of the injury; the purpose of a buddy statement is to provide objective information, and anything speculative can dilute the credibility of your reference and your claim. Include a Date, Contact Information, and a Signature To some, this information might seem so basic that it hardly warrants mentioning; however, it's absolutely essential to include. Because these statements are being used as legal evidence, a signature is critical for certifying that the statements being made are true. Who Should Provide Your Statements? Determining who should provide you with a VA buddy statement is important, as having the right person write it can maximize how persuasive your claim is. Veterans who served alongside you can provide some of the most powerful testimony, as shown in Mr. Haselwander's case. Eyewitness accounts can verify the information that could be missing from your official records. However, depending on what the claim is made for, some Veterans may not be able to reference their fellow service members. Some claims are made for developments that occur following your service, or for stressors that you never mentioned in your service. For example, in the case of an MST/PTSD survivor who was raped, she didn't feel comfortable reporting it to anyone in her chain of command. In this case, buddy statements from family members were able to provide context regarding the ways she changes following the assault. Each claim is different, so the best author for your buddy statements will depend on your specific circumstances. Consulting with a VA-accredited lawyer can help you develop a strategy for producing the most effective buddy statements. Other VA Buddy Letter FAQs Buddy statements can be massively beneficial to your claim. However, like with the claims process as a whole, they can be complex, and you may have other questions. Here, we'll address some other common questions about VA buddy statements: What's the Difference Between a Buddy Letter and a Lay Statement? There's no difference between buddy statements and lay statements. Buddy statements are also known as supporting statements or lay evidence, but the terms are often used interchangeably. Depending on what you read, it may appear there's some connotation that a buddy statement comes from someone you served with, whereas a lay statement comes from a civilian with whom you have a close relationship; however, they're all functionally the same. Who Can Write a Buddy Statement? Any competent and credible person over the age of 18 can write a VA buddy statement. Essentially, 'competent and credible' means that they must have knowledge of the issue or injury, and their statements on the matter must be accurate and without contradictory information, like conflicting dates or injuries. You can also write a statement yourself. How Do I Submit a Buddy Statement? Currently, VA Form 21-10210 is the primary way to submit a VA buddy statement. This is because it is considered official evidence or testimony, and the reference needs to legally certify that they're telling the truth. To avoid the possibility of a buddy letter being disqualified or thrown out, be sure to consult with an experienced and VA-accredited lawyer before submitting a buddy letter as evidence for your claim. VA Buddy Letter Example for PTSD/Disability: This letter is an educational resource, serving only as an example of a buddy letter. The following does not constitute legal advice, establish a client-attorney relationship, nor should it be used in your claim. [Name] and contact information, such as phone number, email address, and home address: [Name] is John Doe, brother of Jane Doe. Jane served in the United States Marine Corps from February, 2013, to May, 2017. Prior to service, Jane was a very entertaining person to be around. She was very talkative, funny, and incredibly friendly. She captained her high school's soccer team and was her class valedictorian. Jane and I exchanged letters on a bi-weekly basis for the first two and a half years of her service; however, in July of 2015 she did not write back. I sent her more letters and only received a very brief response in August. After that, her communication was incredibly sporadic for the remainder of her service. I could tell that something had changed or happened, but when I pressed her on it in our letters, she would either not respond for months at a time, or avoid the questions altogether. In December of 2016, she sent me a letter explaining that she had been raped following a 4th of July celebration in 2015. She said that the perpetrator had been her commanding officer, and that she didn't feel comfortable telling anyone. She said she was only telling me now, as she had applied for and been granted a transfer. Despite that, she still felt paranoid wherever she went, and didn't think she could report the incident without retaliation. She said that she no longer felt like she could trust those around her, and that she was uncomfortable and threatened both while alone and with others. Jane was honorably discharged in May of 2017. My whole family was excited to see her, but the Jane that came home wasn't the same person we saw ship out years before.

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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 NVA troops who trapped and shot down 3 crew members. we saw in, killing all crew members and finally killing the pilot they then began to rescue the crew of screens we were then forced to return home and our squadron was chasing down bombers and providing covering fire. they were not getting any response to fire and we were being shot at. these boats caused them to be captured. so the edge of my time an crew were called to be transported, everybody reacted or fled with anxiety and fear all at the same time. it was during this time that we had a year, each other back that I became good friends with Richard Raymond Brown, we flew from B-52s until 12 Dec 66 on many combat missions together, never being separated the air never. Richard was to be very responsible, trustworthy, extremely knowledgable and dependable. I would say that my life would be incomplete without Richard and I would always be in the same position. In our time, this was a valued relationship.

While back on Guam because combat and weather reasons, 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 run up across the runway at once

Despite friends and family being eager to see her after she came home, she became anxious and withdrew from these social settings she once thrived in. Often, she wouldn't leave her bedroom at our parent's home for days at a time. She stopped taking care of her health and hygiene. Eventually my parents intervened, and things seemed to get better; she got a job at a local diner and began working, but the pressure and anxiety of being in front of strangers she didn't know and couldn't trust was too much for her to bear. Jane began drinking constantly. Eventually, she lost her job. My parents had to pick her up after she was fired, and she wouldn't let them touch her or console her. Several days later, my parents checked Jane into the hospital to get her help. In early 2020, Jane was diagnosed with PTSD. She now takes anti-anxiety medications prescribed by her psychiatrist and attends weekly therapy sessions. However, despite this, she still removes herself from situations that require even a minimal amount of socializing. She no longer keeps in touch with any of her friends, and still struggles to hold down a job due to her anxiety. Jane is only a shadow of the person I knew when she left for service years ago. I, John Doe, certify under penalty of perjury pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746(2) that the foregoing is true and correct. [Signature, date] When a veteran files a disability claim with the Department of Veterans Affairs, having a Statement in Support of Claim, or "buddy letter," can provide additional information that can help their claim get approved. A buddy letter can provide evidence of where the event or injury that caused a disability occurred, when it happened, other details about the event and its impact on the veteran filing the claim.

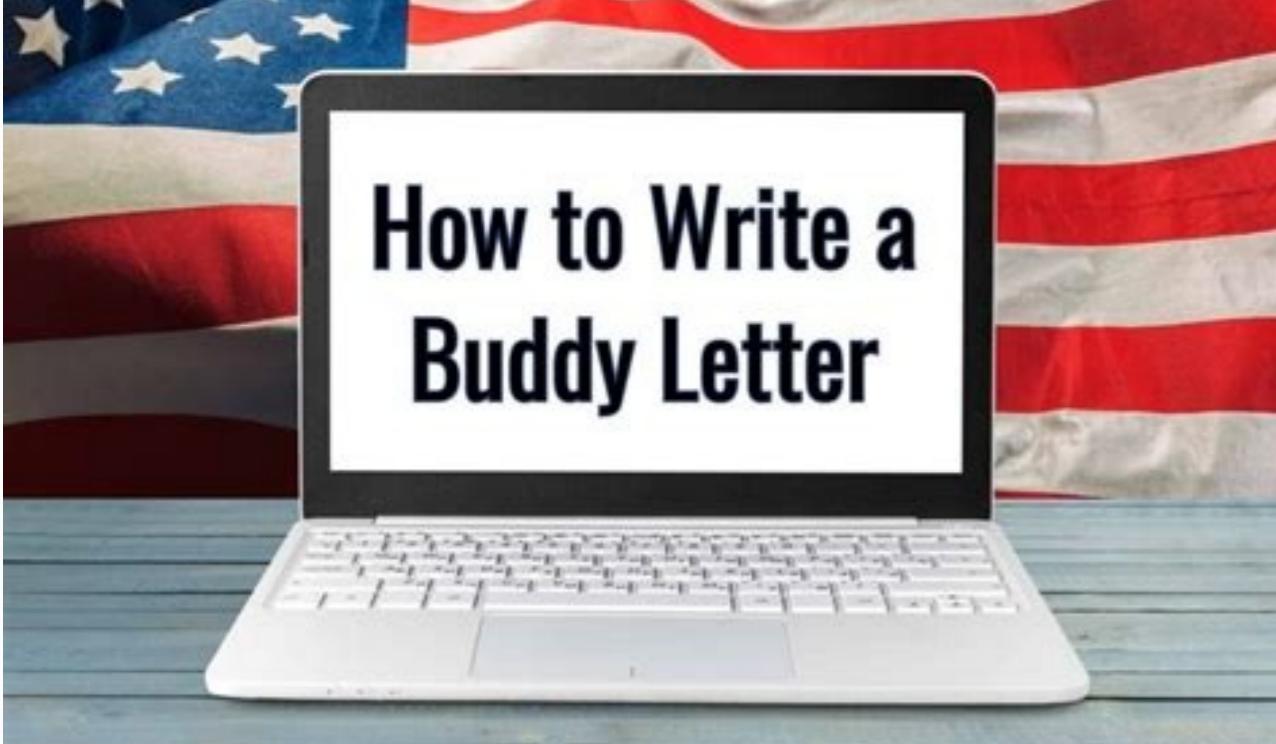


Who needs a buddy letter? Veterans who are filing a VA disability claim and are missing necessary information such as medical records, may benefit from having someone they know write a buddy letter to support their claim. Buddy letters can also be beneficial in cases where medical records are available, but more evidence is needed on how an injury or event has led to changes in a veteran's behavior, work performance or relationships with others.

A buddy letter can be important to the claims process since a supportive and credible statement can help ensure that the VA disability claim gets approved. It is possible an event or injury occurring during combat may never be recorded by a veteran's military unit. For veterans who have experienced such an event or injury, it may be difficult to file a disability claim for conditions related to the event. In these situations, having a buddy letter from a fellow service member who either experienced the event as well, or witnessed the veteran's involvement in the event or injury can be helpful in ensuring a claim is approved by the VA.

Who should write a buddy letter? A buddy letter can be from anyone who knows the veteran and who can serve as a credible witness to the veteran's condition. The only requirement is that the individual is 18 years or older. These individuals may include: A spouse A fellow service member A pastor A friend An adult child Some veterans may not be able to identify or contact a fellow service member to provide a buddy letter. For these veterans, local veterans service organizations can provide resources and suggestions for finding other veterans who are willing to write a buddy letter. A buddy letter can also be useful in scenarios where an event or injury occurred, but a veteran did not seek medical care right away. For these situations, a credible statement of support from a fellow service member who served with the veteran and witnessed the event can be key in getting a claim approved by the VA. When reviewing a claim, the VA usually gives patients the benefit of the doubt if their claim does not have sufficient medical evidence. In this instance, a buddy statement can still be useful to provide additional support for a claim. There are two main types of buddy letters: From coworkers: A letter from a fellow service member who served alongside the veteran can help establish when and where a service-connected disability occurred, as well as specific details about the event. A coworker letter should come from someone who is familiar with the veteran's service, and who witnessed the event that caused or worsened the disability.

Fellow service members can also outline any behavioral issues or changes in work performance that the veteran experienced as a result of the event or injury.



From a friend or family member: These letters should focus on how the veteran's disability has impacted their personal life and relationships with family and friends. The letter can include details on the veteran's personality traits before their injury, compared to after their injury occurred. The letter should also explain any changes in behavior, whether or not the disability has had any negative impacts on relationships, and how it has impacted the veteran's daily life. » MORE: Unlock Your VA Disability Benefits: Improve Your Rating What should a buddy letter include? A buddy letter can detail how the physical and/or mental impacts of an injury are impacting the life of a veteran or provide details on a certain event or injury that led to a disability. Once an individual has been identified to develop a statement, it is important that the veteran submitting a claim provides information about their disability and their VA claim application, so that the writer understands the specific event or injury and can discuss it in their statement.



The statement should include: Who was involved in the injury or incident A detailed description of what happened Where the injury or incident occurred The specific date of the injury or incident A description of the claimant's behavior and abilities before and after the injury or incident A buddy letter should include as much detail as possible, and may include the following: How the service member was impacted by the event Any changes in physical health or behavior as a result of the event The type of treatment required because of the event or injury When writing a buddy letter, these guidelines should be followed as much as possible: Try to keep the letter one page in length or shorter Anyone who writes a buddy letter should include their contact information, their name and signature, the full name of the veteran that the letter is for, and the date The author can use VA form 21-4138 but it is not required. If the form is not used, the author should include this statement at the end of the letter: "I certify that my statements are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief." » **MORE: Maximize Your Veteran Benefits: Get Accurate VA Disability Ratings Steps for Writing a Buddy Letter** Ultimately, a buddy letter from a friend of a veteran should be broken down into four main sections: How do you know the veteran? This section should explain the relationship between the veteran and the writer; state your name, how long you have known the veteran, how frequently you interact with the veteran, and how you know each other. State the name of the veteran who you are writing the letter for. What did you witness, or what are you witnessing in regard to the event? Explain in as much detail as possible how the veteran acted before the event, whether or not they had any health issues, or any personality traits they exhibited. Explain how the veteran changed as a result of the event, including their health, personality, behavior, work performance, and relationships. What are the veteran's current symptoms of their disability? Explain, in as much detail as possible, the current symptoms the veteran is experiencing as a result of their disability. It is not necessary to explain everything, just anything that you know about. If there are certain things that a veteran can no longer do as a result of their disability, mention those as well. Sign and date the letter. Include your name and the date, and the statement "I certify that the statements on this form are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief." Give buddy letter to the veteran. Once the letter is completed, the author can give the letter to the veteran so that they can upload it along with the rest of the documentation for their claim.