

CERTIFICATION OF CLINICIANS PERFORMING VA DISABILITY EVALUATIONS

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE.** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive updates VHA policy for an education and certification program for clinicians who perform compensation and pension (C&P) or Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) disability evaluations.
- 2. SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES.** This VHA Directive updates VHA Directive 2008-005, Certification of Clinicians Performing Compensation and Pension Evaluations, dated January 29, 2008, by updating terminology and nomenclature and stating the updated training courses. This VHA Directive additionally revises the responsibilities of the Office of Disability and Medical Assessment (DMA), formerly the Disability Examination Office (DEMO), originally known as the Compensation and Pension Examination Program (CPEP).
- 3. RELATED ISSUES.** None.
- 4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE.** The Office of Disability and Medical Assessment (10NC8) is responsible for the contents of this VHA Directive. Questions may be referred to the Director, Clinical Programs and Administrative Operations, Office of Disability and Medical Assessment at 202-461-6699.
- 5. RESCISSIONS.** VHA Directive 2008-005, Certification of Clinicians Performing Compensation and Pension Evaluations, dated January 29, 2008, is rescinded.
- 6. RECERTIFICATION.** This VHA Directive is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of April 2018.

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CERTIFICATION OF CLINICIANS PERFORMING VA DISABILITY EVALUATIONS

1. PURPOSE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive establishes policy for the implementation of an education and certification program for clinicians who perform compensation and pension (C&P) or Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) disability evaluations. **AUTHORITY:** 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) 7301(b).

2. BACKGROUND

a. VHA performs over a million Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability evaluations yearly. As part of the ongoing quality assurance program operated by the Office of Disability and Medical Assessment (DMA), and from reports issued by VA's Office of the Inspector General (OIG), it has been concluded that there is observed variation in the performance and quality of VA disability evaluation reports between the Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs).

b. As health care providers traditionally approach evaluations in the purely clinical domain, training is critical to ensure that they have an understanding of the legal ramifications of the evaluations, and what elements are required by the Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA) in order to make a valid determination on disability benefit claims. Given the importance of a thorough evaluation to the Veteran or Servicemember in terms of eligibility for future benefits, it is critical that standards are consistently enforced and applied fairly across all VISNs. As a result, VHA and VBA have determined the need for a training and certification program established for all clinicians performing VA disability evaluations. These courses are available on VA's Talent Management System (TMS) at <http://www.tms.va.gov>, to meet the requirements identified within this Directive. **NOTE:** To locate the courses search for the keyword "DMA" within the TMS search tab.

3. POLICY: It is VHA policy that all clinicians designated to conduct VA disability evaluations must complete the required training modules and post-tests and become certified by DMA; new clinicians must be certified prior to being allowed to perform any VA disability evaluation.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. **Under Secretary for Health.** The Under Secretary for Health, or designee, is responsible for oversight of DMA.

b. **Office of Disability and Medical Assessment (DMA).** DMA is responsible for:

(1) The development, evolution, management, and implementation of the ongoing clinician certification program, which includes:

(a) Working collaboratively with the Employee Education System (EES) to:

1. Produce the certification training modules; and

2. Document, and track, clinicians who have successfully completed the required training.
 - (b) Coordinating the certification process and providing a list of certified clinicians to the appropriate field facility.
 - (c) Monitoring field facilities for compliance with this Directive.
- c. **Employee Education System (EES) Office.** The EES Office is responsible for the:
 - (1) Production of VA disability training modules in direct collaboration with DMA and field-based subject matter experts who perform VA disability evaluations;
 - (2) Development and maintenance of the web-based training and testing sites; and
 - (3) Access to course completion and testing data.
- d. **VISN Director.** Each VISN Director is responsible for ensuring:
 - (1) Certification of all clinicians performing VA disability evaluations (including fee-for-service providers) within their areas of responsibility. This does not include providers associated with or accessed through the Disability Examination Management (DEM) Contract.
 - (2) Additional instructions provided by DMA on the certification process are distributed to the VISN facilities.
- e. **Facility Director.** Each facility Director is responsible for ensuring:
 - (1) Certification of all clinicians performing VA disability evaluations (including fee-for-service providers) within their area of responsibility. This does not include providers associated with or accessed through the DEM Contract;
 - (2) All clinicians who perform VA disability evaluations (for VHA this means all VA employees and Fee-For-Service providers) complete the interactive web-based training module titled “General Certification Overview Course;”
 - (3) All clinicians who perform VA disability evaluations (for VHA this means all VA employees and Fee-For-Service providers) successfully complete the post-test examination; and
 - (4) Requirements are met for designated specialty evaluations. In addition to completing the interactive web-based training module titled “General Certification Overview Course” and successfully completing its post-test examination, which includes:
 - (a) Clinicians performing Joint, Feet, and Spine evaluations, must complete the module titled “Musculoskeletal Examination” and successfully complete its post-test;
 - (b) Clinicians performing initial and/or review mental disorders evaluations, must complete the module titled “Initial Mental Disorders” and successfully complete its post-test;

(c) Clinicians performing initial and/or review Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) evaluations must complete the module titled “Initial Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)” and successfully complete its post-test; and

(d) Clinicians who perform Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) evaluations must complete the module titled “TBI Evaluations” and successfully complete its post-test.

(5) Clinicians complete new modules as may be required to enhance the efficacy of the disability evaluation process.

(6) Any VHA clinician may take the certification training and receive continuing medical education (CME) for course completion. Residents and interns assisting with disability evaluations as part of their graduate training curriculum under the supervision of a VHA certified disability evaluation examiner are encouraged to complete the training modules that are appropriate to their courses of training.

5. REFERENCES: None.