



ACN 127/20 - OCT 2020 VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA) SEPARATION HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

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ALCOAST COMMANDANT NOTICE

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TO ALCOAST

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ACN 127/20

SUBJ: VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA) SEPARATION HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

A. Title 10, U.S.C Section 1145(a)(5)(a) and 1074n

B. Coast Guard Medical Manual, COMDTINST M6000.1F

C. The Separation History and Physical Examination (SHPE) for the DoD Separation Health Assessment (SHA) Program, DoD Instruction 6040.46

1. REF (A) requires the completion of a physical exam and Mental Health Assessment (MHA) just before separation for most service members (SMs) ending a period of active duty service. REFs (B) and (C) provide policy for the completion of the physical exam, also known as Separation History and Physical Examination (SHPE). SMs who file a disability claim with the VA prior to separation, via the Veterans Affairs (VA) Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) program, will receive a VA provided Separation Health Assessment (SHA). This ACN authorizes the use of the VA SHA to meet the requirements for a military SHPE and MHA.

2. Under the VA BDD program, SM must file their VA disability compensation claim between 90 and 180 days prior to separation (or final out-processing date with approval of SM and Command). This provides time for VA to schedule the SHA and other exams, review treatment records and evaluate the claim before separation. Most claimants receive their decision the day after leaving active duty.

3. To begin the claims process, SMs should submit their application, service treatment records, and other required documents online through eBenefits: <https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/> or in person with a Veterans Service Organization or a VA representative at a military installation. The SM must be available within 45 days for scheduling their SHA and other required examinations. More details on the BDD claims process and program eligibility may be found at: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/factsheets/general/BDDFactSheet.pdf>.

4. Upon completion of their SHA, separating SMs must immediately notify their supporting Coast Guard Clinic of the completed SHA. The clinic will review the SHA to ensure it meets the requirements of the SHPE and MHA and will document it the health record.

5. SMs who decide not to participate in the BDD program and/or who are unable to meet the timelines in paragraph 2 may still file a regular disability claim with the VA. In this case, the SM will receive a decision regarding their disability claim as per

normal VA disability claim timelines. These SM must still complete the SHPE at a Coast Guard or Department of Defense Military Treatment Facility (DoD MTF).

6. The following recommendations are applicable to all SMs, regardless of when they decide to file a disability claim with the VA:

- a. Make/ obtain a personal copy of the CG health record prior to separation.
- b. Personally ensure all care notes from health care providers that do not work within a CG clinic are provided to the respective health record custodian for inclusion in CG health record. SMs may not be able to obtain these records when they separate if too much time has passed.
- c. Contact a Veteran's Service Organization for assistance in navigating the VA claims process.

7. A Technical Directive that delineates procedural guidance for the completion of the SHA, with MHA, will be promulgated by HSWL SC within 30 days of this ACN and will be published at: <https://cg.portal.uscg.mil/units/hswlsc/SitePages/Unit%20Directives.aspx>.

8. POC: LCDR Ian W. Marks, HSWL SC Operational Medicine Division, (757) 652-8347, Ian.W.Marks@uscg.mil.

9. Released by RADM Dana L. Thomas, Director, Health, Safety, and Work-Life.

10. Internet release is authorized.



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