

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN  
OFFICE OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (HEALTH AFFAIRS)  
AND  
UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS  
AFFAIRS**

**SUBJECT: Guidelines for Completion of a Single Separation Physical Examination that Meets the Requirements for a Department of Veterans Affairs Compensation and Pension (C&P) Disability Evaluation Examination**

1. Purpose: To document the agreement to establish new policy promoting completion of a VA-style C&P disability evaluation physical examination before discharge for separation or retiring service members who are expected to/or might file claims for service-connected disability and VA compensation.

2. References:

- a. "Final Report on the Evaluation of the Separation Examination Test," The Management Decision and Research Center, Boston, Mass., 8 September 1997
- b. Title 10, United States Code
- c. Title 38, United States Code

3. Background: One physical examination for service members separating or retiring from the services should suffice for use by both DoD and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as the basis for rating disability compensation. For individuals filing claims for service-connected compensation, VA needs sufficient information from an examination report to adjudicate benefit eligibility. Currently, physical examinations performed within the military are not always suited to this purpose and typically necessitate a second physical examination performed by VA physicians. This redundant system is inconvenient to service members/veterans and delays claim processing, access to VA healthcare, and disability compensation.

Together, DoD and VA explored how to perform comprehensive physical examinations that document the physical status and medical condition of military personnel at the time of discharge in an effort to speed the processing of claims for VA compensation. In 1994, the Department of the Army and the VA jointly initiated the Separation Examination Test. The final report on this test was published in September 1997 and demonstrated that DoD and VA can successfully perform a combined separation physical examination

4. Scope: Coordination of physical examinations for separation from active duty and for determination of disability for veterans' benefits presents an opportunity to improve service, achieve efficiencies and reduce expenditures of the Federal Government.

Financial benefits to both VA and DoD are expected through eliminating duplication and clarifying roles and responsibilities. Local cost sharing and resource availability issues will be subjects of mutual agreement, reflected in implementation plans acceptable to the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

5. Responsibilities: To maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of the separation physical examination, the following actions shall be taken:

a. Service members who are referred to the Disability Evaluation System for determination of fitness, or service members who are at the time of separation/retirement anticipate applying for service-connected disability compensation from the VA as documented on DD Form 2697 "Report of Medical Assessment", shall receive a physical examination that meets VA disability compensation requirements using a standard VA format. VA staff is expected to perform a great percentage of these examinations. The Service Medical Record, recent laboratory, radiological and other test results should accompany the claimant for VA benefits to the place of examination so that testing is not duplicated. Local implementation details, including the location for performance of such examinations shall be determined by mutual agreement of the Regional Lead Agent and the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Director. Implementation shall optimize effective use of resources and convenience for the service member, including use of both DoD and VA facilities and staff as appropriate.

b. In those geographic areas where VA may not reasonably be able to provide examining physicians (either using VA employees or by contract), DoD physicians shall perform the physical examination using VA protocols. At a minimum, the examination shall include that part of the standard VA physical examination applicable to the disabilities claimed as service-connected. A complete Review of Systems (ROS) that documents physical condition at the time of separation from the military shall also be conducted as part of the physical examination. All applicable laboratory tests and radiological studies shall be included in the physical examination package to minimize duplicative examinations at VA.

6. Effective Date: This agreement becomes effective on the date of last signature.

/s/

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GARY A. CHRISTOPHERSON  
Acting Assistant Secretary of  
Defense for Health Affairs  
Date 5/19/98

/s/

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KENNETH W. KIZER, M.D., M.P.H.  
Under Secretary for Health  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
DATE 12/17/97