



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Benefits Administration

Military Sexual Trauma

Disability Compensation for Conditions Related to Military Sexual Trauma (MST)

We may determine you have disabilities related to your military service. If so, you could receive:

- Monthly nontaxable compensation
- Enrollment in the VA health care system
- 10-point hiring preference for federal employment
- Other important benefits

Ask your VA representative or Veterans Service Organization (VSO) about:

- Disability compensation
- Pension
- Health care
- Caregiver program
- Career services
- Educational assistance
- Home loan guaranty
- Insurance

Some Veterans may have experienced sexual trauma while serving. We understand these experiences can affect mental and physical health. These effects can continue for many years. You can apply for disability compensation for current difficulties. These problems must be related to your service. This includes those related to MST. We have MST coordinators at all local regional benefit offices. They can help you through your claim. Visit <https://www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/mstcoordinators.asp> to locate one near you.

MST Definition

MST is defined by Title 38 U.S. Code 120D. It states MST is:

- Psychological trauma resulting from a physical assault of a sexual nature
- Battery of a sexual nature
- Sexual harassment which occurred while the Veteran was serving on:
 - Active duty
 - Active duty for training
 - Inactive duty training

Sexual harassment is different. It is defined as “repeated, unsolicited verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature.”

Disability Compensation for MST

Disability compensation is not given for MST. However, you can receive it for conditions that result from MST.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a Result of MST

It is possible to have PTSD and other mental health disorders after MST. Any trauma can result in these disorders. PTSD is the most common mental health diagnosis related to MST.

Disability Claim Evidence

The following can support your MST claim:

- Department of Defense sexual assault or harassment reporting forms
- Investigative reports completed during military service

We know not all sexual trauma events are reported. PTSD claims related to MST require less evidence. Instead, we now look for “markers.” These may be signs, events or circumstances. These provide some clue the traumatic event happened. Some examples of markers are:

- Records from official sources
 - Law enforcement
 - Rape crisis centers

- Mental health counseling centers
- Hospitals
- Physicians
- Pregnancy tests
- Tests for sexually transmitted diseases
- Statements from others
 - Family members
 - Roommates
 - Clergy members
 - Fellow Service members
 - Counselors
- Requests for transfer to another military duty assignment
- Decrease in work performance
- Substance abuse
- Episodes of the following without clear cause:
 - Depression
 - Panic attacks
 - Anxiety
- Unexplained behavior (economic or social)
- Relationship issues, like divorce
- Sexual dysfunction

Standards of Evidence for MST-Related PTSD Claims

In 2002, we relaxed required evidence standards for these claims. We did this to consider all available evidence. Military service records may not contain the evidence you need. VA regulation now states that evidence from non-military sources can be used.

Sometimes direct evidence of an MST is not available. In these cases, we may request a medical opinion. We will also use any markers to verify the MST. This will help relate it to current PTSD symptoms.

Previously Denied Claims

We have developed an increased awareness of MST issues.

In 2011, we provided special training to employees who conduct examinations for these claims. This includes mental health clinicians and office personnel. The training is ongoing. Sessions focus on finding marker evidence to support claims. If you filed an MST-related PTSD claim before December 2011, please refile. We want everyone to reap the benefits of this training. You can request a re-evaluation through your local VA regional office.

Re-Evaluating a Previously Denied Claim

We are happy to review a previously denied MST-related PTSD claim. Simply call your regional office at 800-827-1000. You can also log into your eBenefits account. Visit <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov>.

New Information During a Re-Evaluation

Send any new evidence when you request your re-evaluation. You can find VSOs, MST specialists or Women Veterans Coordinators at every VA regional office. They can help you choose the best information to submit.

Treatment for MST-Related Conditions

We provide free health care for physical and mental health conditions related to MST. You do not need documentation of the MST experiences or a disability compensation rating. Even if you are not eligible for other VA care, you may qualify for this free health care.

Applying for Disability Compensation

There are many ways to apply:

- Complete VA Form 21-526, Veteran's Application for Compensation and/or Pension. Find this form at: <https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-526-ARE.pdf>.
- Apply online at <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov>.
- Appoint an accredited Veterans Service Officer (VSO) to help file your claim.

There are male and female MST coordinators at every VA regional office. They are available to help you.

- We will connect you with an MST coordinator. Call 800-827-1000.

- You can also email your local MST coordinator. Find email addresses at <http://www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/mstcoordinators.asp>.
- To learn more about MST-related treatment, visit <http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/msthome.asp>.