

How to obtain National Guard military personnel and medical files

Preparing to file a claim with the VA:

As a former Member of the National Guard (NG) **and/or Reserve**, finding the right evidence for filing a VA claim can be tricky. There are two things that must be submitted to get approval: 1. Proof an event occurred in the military that caused or aggravated a condition and 2. Proof that the same condition which began in the military is still a chronic condition today. If the evidence submitted to the VA does not meet either one of these requirements, then the claim will be denied.

It is important to know that as a traditional Guard/**Reserve** member can only claim injuries for drill and annual training. The exception is a heart attack that occurs during actual drill hours. When you get in your car to drive home, then you are not on duty for VA purposed. It is only when going on a long term order, can you claim illness. This is based on the reality that you cannot prove the military caused an illness when you are only in drill status two days of the month. It is assumed the other 28-29 days of the month caused your illness.

The military medical file is the key to a successful claim since it validates that the military broke you. If you are looking to file with the VA, you must take the necessary steps to get this information. Many Veteran Service Officer's (VSO) believe in the VA's ability to obtain military files but the reality is that most often, the VA will have a difficult time finding the right military department who has your file. Usually, this search extends a claim's processing time by as much as 6-8 months. Often the VA cannot get records at all. It is always better for you the Member or Veteran to go after his or her own records to avoid delays and denials.

In addition, before a claim is submitted, a **VSO** who is accredited with the VA, should be looking through all the military medical documents for complaints and diagnosis prior to submitting the claim to confirm service connection. If they wait for the VA to get these records, then they are risking the integrity of the claim because they are not validating the evidence is strong enough for approval. The VA needs proof the military caused your condition. You have to think like a lawyer. A lawyer would never go into court and tell a judge he/she should rule in their favor based on the lawyer's opinion. The lawyer will have proof.

Without complaints in the military medical file, a Veteran must seek other evidence to support it began in the military like buddy statements which confirm the event occurred during military time. If SGT Jones saw you stumble during drill and heard you complain your back was hurt, then he/she can

write a statement of what he/she saw. You would then need medical evidence from your doctor that you sought medical care right after that drill for your back. You would then add an LES showing the date you drilled to complete your claim. Now you have well established proof, your military service hurt your back.

Getting military medical and personnel files:

For many NG Members who were released prior to 2005, the state they served with is holding their files in a state or NG run archive. Here in Washington State, our archive has records dating back to 1890. For those released from the WA National Guard after 2005, records were sent to the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis and can be obtained through the NPRC website: <https://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records>

For all records request we need to start with using the SF 180 form. This is the link in getting the current form:

<https://www.archives.gov/files/research/order/standard-form-180.pdf>

The key with this form is understanding where to send this request. On the third page of the form SF 180, it lists where each branch has sent their records to. The following page shows the listing for Air and Army from this form. All branches can be found on page three of the SF180.

BRANCH	CURRENT STATUS OF SERVICE MEMBER	ADDRESS CODE	
		Personnel Record	Medical or Service Treatment Record
AIR FORCE	Discharged, deceased, or retired before 5/1/1994	14	14
	Discharged, deceased, or retired 5/1/1994 – 9/30/2004	14	11
	Discharged, deceased, or retired on or after 10/1/2004	1	11
	Active (including National Guard on active duty in the Air Force), TDRL, or general officers retired with pay	1	
	Reserve, retired reserve in nonpay status, current National Guard officers not on active duty in the Air Force, or National Guard released from active duty in the Air Force	2	
	Current National Guard enlisted not on active duty in the Air Force	13	

ARMY	Discharged, deceased, or retired before 11/1/1912 (enlisted) or before 7/1/1917 (officer)	6	
	Discharged, deceased, or retired 11/1/1912 – 10/15/1992 (enlisted) or 7/1/1917 – 10/15/1992 (officer)	14	
	Discharged, deceased, or retired after 10/16/1992	14	11
	Active enlisted, officers	7	
	Former National Guard/USAR personnel	14	—

(See record location chart next page)

ADDRESS LIST OF CUSTODIANS (BY CODE NUMBERS SHOWN ABOVE) – Where to write/send this form			
1	Air Force Personnel Center HQ AFPC/DPSIRP 550 C Street West, Suite 19 Randolph AFB, TX 78150-4721	6	National Archives & Records Administration Old Military and Civil Records (NWCTB-Military) Textual Services Division 700 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W. Washington, DC 20408-0001
2	Air Reserve Personnel Center Records Management Branch (DPTARA) 18420 E. Silver Creek Ave. Bldg. 390 MS 68 Bucklev AFB, CO 80011	7	US Army Human Resources Command ATTN: AHRC-PDR-V 1600 Spearhead Division Ave., Dept 420 Fort Knox, KY 40122-5402 askhrc.army@us.army.mil
3	Commander, Personnel Service Center (PSD-MR) MS7200 US Coast Guard 4200 Wilson Blvd., Suite 1100 Arlington, VA 29598-7200 http://uscg.mil/psc/adm	8	<i>Reserved.</i>
4	Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps Manpower Management Support Branch (MMSB-10) 2008 Elliot Road Quantico, VA 22134-5030	9	<i>Reserved.</i>
5	Marine Forces Reserve 4400 Dauphine St. New Orleans, LA 70146-5400	10	Navy Personnel Command (PERS-312E) 5720 Integrity Drive Millington, TN 38055-3120
		11	Department of Veterans Affairs Records Management Center P.O. Box 5020 St. Louis, MO 63115-5020
		12	Division of Commissioned Corps Officer Support ATTN: Records Officer 1101 Wootton Parkway, Plaza Level, Suite 100 Rockville, MD 20852
		13	<i>Reserved.</i>
		14	National Personnel Records Center (Military Personnel Records) 1 Archives Dr. St. Louis, MO 63138-1002 eVetRecs! http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/

Block 13 is actually the state NG archives or NG medical commands if Member is still serving.

If you were discharged prior to 2005, then you need to contact your local Transition Assistance Advisor (TAA) who can direct you to the state's archive. It does not matter how long you have been out of the military, the TAA program is there for you.

If you had active duty service, especially prior to coming into the Guard, then you need to submit your request (SF 180) to both the NPRC archive as well as the VA archive.

Important Phone Numbers:

VA Records Management Center: (Fax) 314-679-3615

NPRC: Fax: 314-801-9195

Customer Service: 314-801-0800 (7 am to 5 PM CST)

Air Reserve Personnel Center: 800-525-0102

NOTE: some components require the SF 180 be mailed to them rather than fax.