



**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
**Veterans Benefits Administration**  
**Washington, D.C. 20420**

May 23, 2014

Director (00/21)  
All VA Regional Offices and Centers

In Reply Refer To: 212C  
Fast Letter 14-04

ATTN: All VBA Regional Offices and Centers  
LAt  
SUBJ: Transition to Electronic Service Treatment Records (STRs)

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this fast letter (FL) is to inform Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regional offices (ROs) and Pension Management Centers about the transition to electronic STRs.

## **Background**

Beginning on January 1, 2014, the military service departments, except the United States Coast Guard (USCG), stopped sending paper STRs to VA for separating or retiring Servicemembers, including those separating from Reserve and National Guard components.

The military service departments, through the military treatment facility (MTF), scan completed and certified electronic STRs into the Department of Defense (DoD) Healthcare Artifacts and Image Management Solution (HAIMS). When the military service departments place the STR documentation into HAIMS, as the authoritative record, the military service departments destroy the paper documentation.

The military service departments certify the electronic STRs as complete within 45 days after the Servicemember separates or retires from military service. Please see Fast Letter (FL) 13-09, *Certification of Completeness of Service Treatment Records (STRs)*, regarding certification of STRs.

## **Applicability**

The new procedures outlined in this fast letter:

- Apply only to STRs for periods of military service (active duty, National Guard, and Reserve) ending on or after January 1, 2014.
- Do not affect USCG, Public Health Service, and National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) STRs.

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- Do not apply to pre-separation claims (do not delay pre-separation claims processing for the purpose of obtaining STRs).
- Do not apply for processing of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) claims (see DIC Claims section).

**NOTE:** Follow established procedures as outlined in [M21-1 Manual Rewrite \(MR\), Part III, subpart iii, Chapter 2](#) “Developing for Service Records” for Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps Veterans separated or retired from military service before January 1, 2014.

## Procedures

### Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps

HAIMS stores STRs for Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps Servicemembers separating or retiring on or after January 1, 2014. VBMS submits an automated request to HAIMS for the complete and certified STR upon VBMS establishing an original claim. **No tracked item generates when this request happens.** In VBMS, the status of the request is located in the “Obtain STRs” section of the “Development Plan” for the claim. The “**STR Status Messages**” section of this fast letter provides descriptions of the messages.

VBMS generates and displays the suspense date for this request. If the suspense date expires before the VBMS user receives an STR Status Message, refer to the **Requesting Assistance** section of this fast letter. The STR request remains active until HAIMS uploads the complete certified STRs into the VBMS eFolder. When HAIMS uploads the STRs in the VBMS eFolder, a new mail indicator will alert VBMS end users that the STRs are available for review.

DoD bulk scans the paper STR folder with the following groupings available in a searchable PDF format for display in the VBMS eFolder as follows:

- Administrative - STR Medical Record Part 1
- Administrative - STR Medical Record Part 2
- Administrative - STR Medical Record Part 3
- Administrative - STR Medical Record Part 4
- Administrative - STR Dental Record Part 1
- Administrative - STR Dental Record Part 2
- Administrative - STR Dental Record Part 3 (Navy Only)
- Administrative - STR Dental Record Part 4 (Navy Only)
- Administrative - STR Administrative Documentation (includes Certification Memo)
- Administrative - STR AHLTA.pdf – The military service departments create this searchable PDF file of the Armed Forces Healthcare Longitudinal Technology Application (AHLTA).

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Upon the establishment of a supplemental claim in VBMS (End Product (EP) 020), VBMS generates an automatic request for additional STRs from HAIMS. This request applies to Servicemembers separated or retired after January 1, 2014, from the Army, Air Force and Marine Corps and seeks additional STRs uploaded in HAIMS after the initial request. A new mail indicator becomes available for the user when the additional STRs are ready for review in the VBMS eFolder. Refer inquires to the PIES mailbox (VBVAWAS/CO/PIES) for expiring suspense dates.

**STR Status Messages**

The following are STR Status Messages that may be provided to the VBMS end user:

<b>VBMS Status Message</b>	<b>Meaning of Status Message</b>
<p>SUCCESS: Veteran is now eligible for an electronic STR. This request has been queued for processing and will be submitted soon.</p>	<p>1. This status message indicates that the Release from Active Duty (RAD) date in VBMS is in the future.</p> <p>2. The RAD date is the same as the date the claim is being established.</p> <p>The system will generate the STR request but will withhold sending the request to HAIMS until 24 hours past the RAD date in VBMS.</p> <p>Note: Once successfully submitted to HAIMS, the status message will be updated to “SUCCESS: Electronic STR Requested. Request Date (xx/xx/xxxx). Request Successful. Suspense Date (xx/xx/xxxx).”</p>
<p>SUCCESS: Electronic STR Requested. Request Date (xx/xx/xxxx). Request Successful. Suspense Date (xx/xx/xxxx).</p>	<p>VBMS sent the request for STRs to HAIMS and displays the date submitted, the status, and VBMS auto suspense date.</p>
<p>SUCCESS: Electronic STR received. Date received (xx/xx/xxxx). Document uploaded to Veteran’s eFolder. Please note - additional STR documents may still be in the process of uploading to the eFolder.</p>	<p>HAIMS uploaded all STR documentation into the VBMS eFolder.</p> <p>Note: The STR is complete if the certification memo is in the VBMS eFolder. If the certification memo is not in the VBMS eFolder, additional STRs may still be in process of uploading.</p>
<p>INFORMATION: STR Requested. Request Date (xx/xx/xxxx). Veteran Already Successfully Subscribed.</p>	<p>There is an active request for STR documentation and any new new STR documentation added to HAIMS will automatically be sent to the VBMS eFolder. No action necessary.</p>

<p>WARNING: Electronic STR Requested. Request date (xx/xx/xxxx). Request Successful. Suspense Date (xx/xx/xxxx) has Expired.</p>	<p>VBMS successfully sent the request to HAIMS but VBMS did not receive any STRs and the suspense date expired. The request will remain pending in VBMS.</p> <p>One reason this status message may occur is because the Servicemember is currently serving in the Reserve or National Guard. Validate Servicemember’s service through Veterans Information Solution (VIS). If the Servicemember is currently serving in a Reserve or National Guard component, follow established follow-up procedures for Reserve and National Guard units.</p> <p>If the Servicemember is still on active duty (including service under titles 10 and 32, United States Code), no action needed. The STR will be uploaded into HAIMS following separation/retirement from military service.</p> <p>If the Servicemember is no longer serving, then contact Central Office at VAVBAWAS/CO/PIES for assistance.</p>
<p>WARNING: This Veteran is not eligible for an Electronic STR Request. Eligibility checked on MM/DD/YYYY at HH:mm. The EP code XX does not meet the eligibility criteria.</p>	<p>The rating EP code that was established is outside of the rating EP bundle. If the STR is needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update the EP code to a rating EP.</li> <li>• Return to the “Obtain STR” tab in the Development Plan section.</li> <li>• Resubmit the STR request by clicking on “Request STR Again”The status message will be updated immediately to reflect a new status.</li> </ul> <p>Note: This will also apply to pre-discharge claims</p>

<p>WARNING: This Veteran is not eligible for an Electronic STR Request. Eligibility checked on MM/DD/YYYY at HH:mm. The RAD Date does not meet the eligibility criteria.</p>	<p>The Veteran’s military profile must be updated to reflect correct RAD date. If the correct RAD is on or after January 01, 2014 then,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update the Veteran’s military service</li> <li>• Return to the “Obtain STR” tab in the Development Plan Section</li> <li>• Resubmit the STR request by clicking on “Request STR Again”</li> <li>• The status message will be updated immediately to reflect a new status.</li> </ul> <p>Note: This will also apply to pre-discharge claims</p>
<p>ERROR: Electronic STR Requested. Request Date (xx/xx/xxxx). Request Unsuccessful. No Veteran Found.</p> <p>Error: Electronic STR Requested. Request Date MM/DD/YYYY. Request unsuccessful. Multiple Veterans Found.</p>	<p>HAIMS could not identify the Veteran. Validate/update all Personal Identifiable Information (PII) and military service.</p> <p>Resubmit the request by clicking on the “Request STRs Again.”</p> <p>If the status message does not change, Contact Central Office at VAVBAWAS/CO/PIES for assistance.</p>
<p>ERROR: Unsuccessful. Internal Server Error.</p> <p><b>Initial status message:</b></p> <p>Electronic STR requested. Request date MM/DD/YYYY. Request incomplete. Note – During this request an external system error was encountered preventing it from completing. An automated retry will be attempted on MM/DD/YYYY at HH:MM AM/PM</p> <p><b>Status message during attempts:</b></p> <p>Electronic STR requested. Request date MM/DD/YYYY. Request incomplete. Note – During this request an external system error was encountered preventing it from completing. Retry attempt X of 4. Next retry attempt MM/DD/YYYY at HH:MM AM/PM</p>	<p>VBMS will make four attempts to request the STR. When all attempts have failed, contact Central Office at VAVBAWAS/CO/PIES for assistance.</p>

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<b>Status message after all four attempts have failed:</b>	
Electronic STR requested. Request date MM/DD/YYYY. This request reached the maximum number of retry attempts.	

### **How the Suspense Date Generates for the STR Automated Requests**

The military services have 45 days from the date of the Veteran's separation from military service to scan the complete and certified STR into HAIMS and make it available to VBA.

VBMS automatically calculates the suspense date based on EP, date of claim, and the military service release date. If the date of claim is within 45 days prior to the Servicemember's separation date, the system calculates and posts a suspense date for the 46<sup>th</sup> day after separation. If the date of claim is 45 days or more after the Veteran's separation date, the system posts an expired suspense date that is 45 days after the date of discharge.

### **Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) Claims**

There is no functionality in VBMS for the establishment of EPs 140 and 029. If STRs are required for the following conditions:

- The deceased Servicemember/Veteran discharged from military service on or after January 01, 2014,
- The deceased Servicemember/Veteran passed away on or after January 01, 2014, **and**
- The date of claim for the EP 140 or 029 occurred on or after January 01, 2014.

Then, the following procedures are applicable:

- The PMC sends an encrypted email to the corporate mailbox BASTL/RMC/NG&RESERVES:
  - Notating in the subject line "PMC 140/029" to distinguish the requests from Reserve/National Guard requests;
  - Including the Servicemember/Veteran's full name (first, middle, last), social security number, and branch of service; **and**
  - Including the requestor's name and contact information (phone and email) for questions.
- VALO requests the electronic STR through the DoD point of contacts (POC).
- Upon receipt of STR, VALO will:
  - Upload the electronic STR into VBMS, and
  - Respond to the PMC email.

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The PMC VBMS user requests the status update from VALO 30 days if they have not responded within 30 days after the user sent the email.

**NOTE:** Follow established procedures processing EPs 140 and 029 when there is no need for the electronic STR.

## **Late Flowing STRs**

DoD individually scans the late and loose flowing documents as identified below for display in the VBMS eFolder as individual STR documents:

- Loose flowing STR documentation - STR documents in PDF format scanned *before* STR certification, and
- Late flowing STR documentation - STR documents in PDF format scanned *after* STR certification.

The military service departments will inform the Veteran of any late flowing STRs and advise the Veteran to contact VBA if these STRs are necessary for their claim.

The military services do not scan duplicate STRs into HAIMS. If there is no pending claim and the Veteran informs VA of late flowing documentation, only the creation of the subsequent claim initiates an automated request for the newly added STRs. Upon receipt of the late flowing STRs, follow established procedures for review of new and material evidence. If a pending compensation claim exists, contact Central Office at VAVBAWAS/CO/PIES for assistance.

## **Other Department of Defense Military Records**

No procedural changes exist for requesting other DoD records (i.e., personnel, in-patient, mental health). Follow established procedures for these records.

## **Requesting Assistance and Questions**

If you encounter technical or procedural issues with electronic STR files contained in the VBMS eFolder, send an inquiry to VAVBAWAS/CO/PIES.

/S/  
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