



# Be on the LOOKOUT

## Scammers target veterans' disability benefits

**I**ncreasingly, claim sharks are targeting veterans by seeking payment to assist with filing public disability benefits questionnaires with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

### WHY IT MATTERS

It's an illegal and predatory scam. Veterans should never pay to file an initial benefits claim.

- **DAV and other VA-accredited representatives** are the only ones the VA permits to file an initial claim on a veteran's behalf. DAV does not, nor will it ever, charge for this service.

### THE BIG PICTURE

With the VA reporting \$135 billion in total annual compensation and the PACT Act becoming law in 2022, veterans benefits are a lucrative target for scammers.

- **According to the U.S. government's Consumer Financial Protection Bureau**, claim sharks, who present themselves as consultants or coaches, use aggressive tactics and false promises to pressure veterans into paying fees for assistance. These fees are often a percentage of future benefits payments.
- **DAV National Service Director Jim Marszalek:** "DAV will never charge a veteran for claims assistance. We have over 3,700 benefits advocates who expertly assist hundreds of thousands of

veterans annually. Helping veterans should never be about making a profit. It's simply about ensuring they receive the care and benefits they've earned."

### WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Heed these deceptive tactics and warning signs. Report suspected wrongdoing to the VA at [va.gov/oig/hotline](https://va.gov/oig/hotline) or 800-488-8244.

- **Any person or organization that charges a fee** or a percentage of benefits to help with an initial claim.
- **Guarantees for a large increase** in a veteran's service-connected disability rating. Only the VA makes disability rating determinations.
- **Payment in exchange for a health care provider's promise** of a diagnosis or exaggeration of a medical condition. Scammers use this deceptive practice to lure veterans.
- **Demands** that veterans sign contracts with membership fees, provide banking information and share account passwords. Claim sharks typically have veterans file their own claim and then come to collect after the VA makes a rating determination.

### MORE INFORMATION

- VA Office of Inspector General fraud toolkit: [va.gov/oig/fraud](https://va.gov/oig/fraud)
- Accredited Representatives Information: [benefits.va.gov/vso](https://benefits.va.gov/vso)
- Find a DAV benefits advocate: [benefitsquestions.org](https://benefitsquestions.org)