



VETS HELPING VETS SINCE 1974

# GUIDELINES FOR A PTSD MENTAL HEALTH EVALUATION

**An evaluation by a qualified mental health professional is often crucial when a veteran is seeking VA disability compensation for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).**

**These pointers may help you to prepare an effective report.**

*Identify the stressful events that led to the development of PTSD, and describe them in some detail.*

1. At the beginning of your report, it's essential to give the VA a solid basis for judging the weight that your evaluation should carry: When did you first meet the veteran? How often have you seen him or her? One-on-one, or in group? At the VA? At another facility? In private practice?  
If you've seen the veteran in a particular program, describe the objectives of the program. If your expertise in PTSD is not apparent from your job title or organizational affiliation, please include enough of your C.V. to give the VA a sense of your qualifications.
2. If you have administered **psychological tests** to the veteran, please identify the tests, state when they were administered, and discuss the significance of the test results.
3. If you have reviewed **records of the veteran's prior treatment**, please identify them.
4. Describe any currently-prescribed **psychotropic medications** and discuss their efficacy for the veteran. Is the veteran suffering from any side effects? Has it been necessary to change medications? To adjust dosages? If so, why? If the veteran has refused to take recommended medications, please discuss the reasons for his or her refusal.
5. Identify the **stressful events** that led to the development of PTSD, and describe them in some detail.
6. Specify when the **onset** of PTSD occurred. Identify the veteran's **symptoms** within each of the DSM PTSD symptom clusters, and indicate their severity. If possible, cite specific instances of each

symptom. Please be certain to state whether the veteran's PTSD was caused by events in the military, as opposed to events in civilian life.

7. Discuss the impact of the veteran's PTSD symptoms upon his or her ***relationships, performance in the workplace, judgment, thinking, and mood.***
8. If the veteran has a history of ***substance abuse***, please state clearly whether (and to what extent) the substance abuse is secondary to PTSD—i.e., self-medication to quell PTSD symptoms. If the veteran's substance abuse has persisted, indicate the probable reason(s).
9. If the veteran has been diagnosed with ***other psychiatric conditions*** (e.g., depression, dysthymia) in addition to PTSD, please state clearly whether (and to what extent) the conditions are secondary to PTSD.
10. Please include a statement regarding the veteran's ***prognosis***. If the prognosis hinges upon whether the veteran remains in treatment, please explain.
11. **A multi-axial assessment—and, in particular, an accurate GAF score on Axis V—is crucial to a thorough evaluation.**

*Discuss the impact of the veteran's PTSD symptoms upon his or her relationships, performance in the workplace, judgement, thinking, and mood.*

#### **NOTE**

The VA typically disregards evaluations more than one year old. If you prepared a full evaluation more than a year ago, it will need to be updated before it can be submitted to the VA.

### **Disclaimer**

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