

# National Veterans Legal Services Program

## UNDERSTANDING THE INTEGRATED DISABILITY EVALUATION SYSTEM (IDES)

### WHAT IS IDES?

IDES is a joint DOD/VA process by which DOD determines whether a Wounded/Ill/Injured Service Member is FIT or UNFIT for continued military service.

### WHAT HAPPENS WHEN FOUND UNFIT?

- The Service Member will obtain either a medical retirement or a severance payment.
- A medical retirement includes military healthcare (TRICARE) for the Service Member, spouse, and children until the age of 18, and a retired military ID card. It also allows the Service Member to apply for Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC) and the higher of VA/DoD monthly payments.
- A severance payment is a one-time cash payment. The veteran is eligible to obtain care at the VA and VA benefits for service-connected conditions

### HOW DOES A SERVICE MEMBER GET INTO IDES?

Entrance into IDES requires the referral of a military medical care provider; a Service Member cannot self-refer.

### ONCE IN THE IDES, WHAT HAPPENS?

- **VA Compensation and Pension (C&P) exams** for all conditions listed on Form 21-0819
- **Medical Evaluation Board (MEB)**: A board comprised of medical professionals determines if one or more medical conditions fail medical retention standards.
- **Physical Evaluation Board (PEB)**: A board comprised of medical providers and military officers determines whether condition(s) found to fail medical retention standards render them FIT/UNFIT for duty. If UNFIT, the DoD applies the VA rating for each unfitting condition.

### WHAT MAKES A CONDITION UNFITTING?

A Service Member will be considered UNFIT when the preponderance of evidence establishes that one or more of a Service Member's medical conditions:

- Makes the Service Member unable to reasonably perform duties of the Service Member's office, grade, rank, or rating.
- Represents a decided medical risk to the health/welfare of the member or others.
- Imposes unreasonable requirements on the military to maintain or protect the Service Member.

### **HOW CAN A SERVICE MEMBER SUPPORT HIS OR HER FITNESS/UNFITNESS?**

- Continue all requisite medical treatment, ensuring not to miss appointments or minimize/exaggerate pain.
- Review medical records to ensure they accurately reflect abilities/disabilities.
- Gather evidence, including a commander's statement, treating physician statements, character references.
- Speak to an attorney, and advocate for yourself.

### **CAN A SERVICE MEMBER APPEAL THE MEB/PEB DECISION? IF SO, HOW?**

- An MEB appeal/rebuttal may be submitted and is reviewed by MEB to correct mistakes regarding condition, diagnosis, symptoms, and/or effect on performance.
- A PEB appeal/rebuttal may be submitted and is reviewed by the Formal PEB, who may affirm the initial findings or issue revised findings.

### **WHY ARE DOD RATINGS DIFFERENT FROM VA RATINGS?**

- The military does not rate, but rather adopts the VA ratings. However, the military only utilizes ratings for conditions deemed unfitting.

### **CAN I CHANGE MY VA RATINGS WHILE IN IDES?**

- You may submit a VA Ratings Reconsideration (VARR) for any and all unfitting conditions. Otherwise, a VA Notice of Disagreement must be filed post discharge.

### **CAN A SERVICE MEMBER APPEAL FINAL IDES FINDINGS POST DISCHARGE?**

- Any veteran who is not satisfied with their final IDES findings may challenge these findings by submitting an application to a Board for Correction of Military Records.

### **NEED ASSISTANCE**

You may contact the National Veterans Legal Services Program to see if you qualify for our free assistance with applications for corrections of military records.



[www.nvlsp.org/what-we-do/Lawyers-serving-warriors/](http://www.nvlsp.org/what-we-do/Lawyers-serving-warriors/)  
202.265.8305 ext. 152 [info@nvlsp.org](mailto:info@nvlsp.org)