

WHAT IS A NEXUS LETTER?

A nexus is a document that a doctor, other medical professional or qualified party prepares for a veteran and in it explains how, in their opinion, the current medical condition is related to their military service. A veteran is not required to submit a nexus letter in connection with their disability claim, but the nexus letter can sometimes make the difference between an award and a denial. Also there is not a specific requirement of when a nexus letter can be submitted. A veteran can submit a nexus letter with their application for benefits, during development of their claim or after an adverse C & P Exam. (Compensation and Pension) However, it's good practice to submit nexus letter earlier rather than later. The nexus letter becomes important in cases where a veteran has not submitted any medical evidence in support of their claim and the C & P examiner concludes that there is no evidence between the veteran's disability and military service.

Doctor's opinions, especially in the form of a nexus letter, can be a very valuable to in a disability claim if they are done correctly. Make sure to communicate with the individual writing the nexus letter about all of the details the letter should include. A good nexus letter uses specific language, includes specific phrases and ties the facts together to draw a conclusion about connection to service. Terminology can be very important in the letter. Many doctors are not familiar with the VA system and VA standards, instead, they are familiar with the concept of "medical certainty". Medical certainty is a much higher standard than the VA requires. In order to avoid a situation where the doctor applies the wrong standard, make sure the VA terminology is explained. For example, the terms "more likely than not" should be used to express there is a 50% likelihood that the veteran's current disability is related to their service. Using other terms may lead the VA to misunderstand the opinion as not supporting service connection.

It is important to note that a doctor should mention in their letter that they have reviewed the veteran's entire file and medical records to which they have access. Failure to do this can result in the VA disregarding the doctor's opinion.

When choosing a doctor or other to provide a nexus letter, start with those treating you or have recently been treating you. The VA does not require this, but oftentimes a treating doctor will have a better understanding of your conditions and the history behind them.

KEEP IN MIND

In summary, here are 5 things that make for a stronger nexus letter

- 1—Keep the letter brief, but still complete. Do so by focusing on facts and conclusions.
- 2—When possible use a doctor or professional who is board certified in health that is at issue.
- 3—Have the doctor state in the letter, they were able to review records to which they had access.
- 4—The opinion does not have to be absolute. Remember to inform that they just need to point out whether “it is as likely as not” that the current condition was caused by an event during service.
- 5—While not required, using a doctor\professional that has recently examined the veteran can add weight to the nexus letter.

Keep in mind that the doctor\professional who agrees to write a nexus letter is a neutral party. As a neutral party they are supposed to provide an honest opinion based on their review of evidence presented to them. The doctor \professional is not required or obligated to agree with the veteran.