



Start with the record type, then use the office or system that actually holds it.

QUESTION 1
What record is missing?

QUESTION 2
Who created or holds it?

CONTROL
Save every request and response

READ FIRST

A broad request sent to the wrong office wastes time. Identify the record type, date range, facility, unit, provider, and purpose before choosing the route.

MILITARY RECORDS

SERVICE AND PERSONNEL ROUTES

STR

Service treatment records

Request through the appropriate military or federal records channel based on branch, service dates, and custody status.

OMPF

Official personnel file

Assignments, evaluations, orders, awards, discipline, and separation documents may be in the OMPF.

UNIT

Unit and event records

Morning reports, deck logs, investigations, and unit histories may require a targeted archive or agency request.

MEDICAL RECORDS

VA AND PRIVATE TREATMENT ROUTES

VA

VA medical records

Use the VA health record tools or request the complete relevant record, including outside-care documents scanned into VA systems.

PRV

Private medical records

Request directly from the provider when possible, or submit a complete authorization so the VA can make reasonable efforts.

SSA

Other federal records

Identify Social Security, workers' compensation, or other agency records only when they are relevant to the claimed issue.

CLAIMS RECORD

C-FILE AND FOIA ROUTES

NEED THE VA CLAIMS FILE?

Request the records needed to understand prior decisions, examinations, codesheets, and evidence. A focused request may be easier to fulfill and review.

FOIA / Privacy Act request

OR

NEED ONE KNOWN DOCUMENT?

Identify the exact decision, examination, codesheet, or date range instead of requesting an undefined record universe.

Use precise scope

REQUEST CONTROL

TRACK THE PAPER TRAIL



Record the request date

Save the portal confirmation, fax receipt, certified-mail record, or submitted form.



Track the custodian

Write down the agency, office, facility, provider, or archive contacted.



Save every response

A negative search or unavailable-record notice is evidence of what was attempted.



Follow up with a narrower request

Use date ranges, units, facilities, record series, and event details.



Tell the VA about unavailable records

Submit alternative evidence and identify the unsuccessful search efforts.

MISSING DOES NOT
MEAN FATAL

When official records are unavailable, use alternate sources such as lay testimony, personnel records, private records, photographs, letters, contemporaneous reports, and other credible evidence.



RateMyVSO.net

Research-backed VA claim education

USE THE RECORDS AND FOIA GUIDES

RateMyVSO.net/dc/service-records

Record custody changes with branch, date, facility, and record type.

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