



HEARING LOSS AND TINNITUS

SECONDARY AND AGGRAVATION PATHWAYS

A calibrated guide to service connection, audiology evidence, and VA rating rules.



CALIBRATED REFERENCE

FOUR POINTS TO UNDERSTAND

CAUSE

SECONDARY CAUSATION

A service-connected disability or its treatment causes a separate hearing or tinnitus disability.

WORSEN

SECONDARY AGGRAVATION

A service-connected disability worsens a separate condition beyond its baseline.

BEFORE

PRE-SERVICE AGGRAVATION

Pre-existing hearing loss worsens during service beyond natural progression.

PROOF

MEDICAL RATIONALE

Identify the diagnosed conditions, chronology, mechanism, baseline when required, and supporting evidence.

Apply the exact regulation and evidence to the individual record. A diagnosis, exposure, or test result does not replace the remaining service-connection elements.

