

CURRENT FORMULA
0 to
100%

VA evaluates the frequency, severity, and duration of symptoms, then determines the resulting level of occupational and social impairment.

01 THE CURRENT RATING LADDER

100 PERCENT	HIGHEST LEVEL TOTAL OCCUPATIONAL AND SOCIAL IMPAIRMENT The overall disability picture shows total impairment in both work and social functioning.	EXAMPLES IN THE FORMULA Gross impairment in thought or communication, persistent danger, disorientation, severe memory loss, or inability to perform daily activities.
70 PERCENT	DEFICIENCIES IN MOST AREAS WORK, SCHOOL, FAMILY RELATIONS, JUDGMENT, THINKING, OR MOOD The condition causes serious impairment across most major areas of life.	EXAMPLES IN THE FORMULA Suicidal ideation, near-continuous panic or depression, impaired impulse control, difficulty adapting to stress, or inability to maintain effective relationships.
50 PERCENT	REDUCED RELIABILITY AND PRODUCTIVITY RECURRING PROBLEMS AFFECT CONSISTENT FUNCTIONING Symptoms materially reduce reliability, productivity, judgment, communication, or relationships.	EXAMPLES IN THE FORMULA Flattened affect, frequent panic attacks, impaired memory or judgment, mood disturbance, and difficulty establishing effective relationships.
30 PERCENT	OCCASIONAL DECREASE IN WORK EFFICIENCY INTERMITTENT INABILITY TO PERFORM OCCUPATIONAL TASKS Routine functioning is generally satisfactory, but symptoms periodically interfere.	EXAMPLES IN THE FORMULA Depressed mood, anxiety, suspiciousness, weekly or less frequent panic attacks, chronic sleep impairment, or mild memory loss.
10 PERCENT	MILD OR TRANSIENT SYMPTOMS IMPAIRMENT APPEARS DURING SIGNIFICANT STRESS Symptoms decrease work efficiency only during stress, or are controlled by continuous medication.	WHAT THE RECORD MAY SHOW Limited functional disruption, stress-related worsening, medication management, and otherwise stable functioning.
0 PERCENT	DIAGNOSED, NONCOMPENSABLE NO COMPENSABLE OCCUPATIONAL OR SOCIAL IMPAIRMENT A diagnosis is present, but symptoms do not interfere with functioning or require continuous medication.	WHAT 0 PERCENT STILL MEANS The condition is service connected and may support future increase or secondary claims if the disability later changes.

02 THE WHOLE-DISABILITY-PICTURE RULE



SYMPTOMS ARE EXAMPLES, NOT A CHECKLIST

A veteran does not need every example listed at a rating level. VA must consider all symptoms and determine whether their effects are similar in severity, frequency, and duration to the chosen level.

- Describe what happens and how often.
- Connect symptoms to work and social functioning.
- Document how long episodes last.
- Include periods of improvement and worsening.

03 THREE DISTINCTIONS THAT MATTER

A

DIAGNOSIS IS NOT THE PERCENTAGE

Most mental disorders use the same formula. The rating depends on impairment, not which diagnostic label appears in the record.

B

ONE SYMPTOM DOES NOT DECIDE THE RATING

VA must evaluate the full disability picture instead of assigning a percentage from one isolated symptom.

C

OVERLAPPING DIAGNOSES USUALLY SHARE ONE RATING

VA generally assigns one mental-health evaluation for overlapping manifestations rather than rating the same impairment twice.

BEFORE RELYING ON A RATING ESTIMATE

DOCUMENT IMPAIRMENT WITH SPECIFIC EXAMPLES



Work reliability, attendance, and productivity



Judgment, thinking, mood, and communication



Relationships and social functioning



Self-care, safety, and daily activities

