

SECONDARY CONDITION

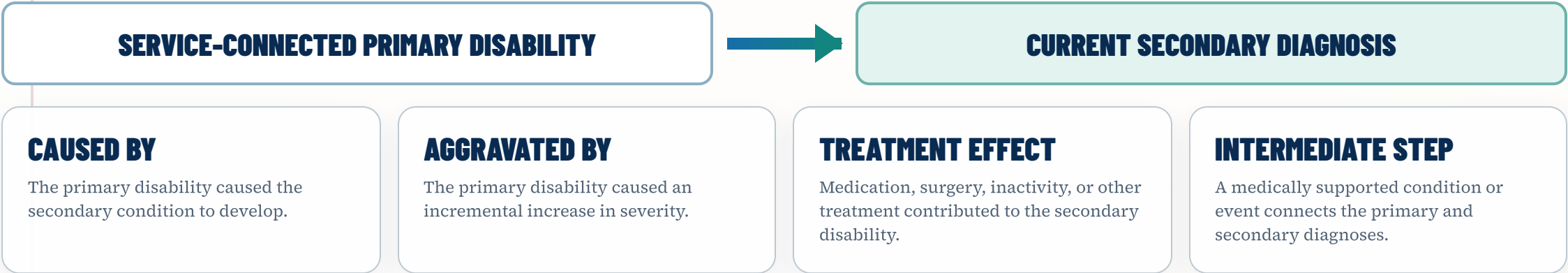
NEXUS ROADMAP



38 CFR 3.310

Get the direction right, then develop the mechanism.

A secondary opinion should identify the service-connected primary disability first and the newly claimed secondary condition second. It should then explain causation, aggravation, treatment effects, or each link in a supported chain.



MEDICAL OPINION CHECKLIST

BUILD EVERY LINK

- 1 CONFIRM PRIMARY STATUS**
Identify the service-connected disability and its relevant treatment history.
- 2 CONFIRM SECONDARY DIAGNOSIS**
Document the separate current disability and its severity.
- 3 STATE THE CORRECT DIRECTION**
Do not rely on research or Board cases about the reverse relationship.
- 4 EXPLAIN THE INDIVIDUAL MECHANISM**
Apply the medical theory to this veteran's timeline, records, and risk factors.
- 5 ANSWER CAUSATION AND AGGRAVATION**
Treat them as separate questions when both are reasonably raised.
- 6 DEVELOP INTERMEDIATE LINKS**
A multi-condition chain is only as strong as its weakest unsupported link.

A GRAPH CONNECTION IS A RESEARCH LEAD
Historical Board pairings and medical articles can identify a theory to investigate. They do not establish an individual nexus.

DIRECTION FIRST. EVIDENCE SECOND. The opinion must address the relationship actually claimed, not merely show that the conditions appear together.