

PRIMARY TO SECONDARY: WHICH DIRECTION IS THE CLAIM?



DIRECTION

The direction determines the question the medical opinion must answer.

A relationship may appear in both directions in Board data. Your claim still needs one clearly stated direction: the established service-connected disability first, and the newly claimed condition second.

START HERE

SERVICE-CONNECTED PRIMARY CONDITION

The disability VA has already service connected, or the disability being claimed as the foundation of the chain.

CLAIM DIRECTION

CLAIM THIS NEXT

CURRENT SECONDARY CONDITION

The separately diagnosed disability alleged to have been caused or worsened by the primary condition or its treatment.

PRIMARY CONDITION CAUSED OR AGGRAVATED SECONDARY CONDITION

That is the legal and medical question. Reversing the order asks a different question.

CORRECT FRAMING

- Names both diagnosed conditions
- Identifies which condition is already service connected
- States causation, aggravation, treatment effect, or a supported chain
- Uses evidence addressing that exact direction

DIRECTION ERRORS

- Treating association as proof of causation
- Reversing the primary and secondary conditions
- Using an opinion that addresses only the opposite direction
- Skipping an intermediate condition in a multi-step chain

PLAIN-LANGUAGE CLAIM STATEMENT

I am claiming [secondary diagnosis] as secondary to my service-connected [primary disability], including as caused by or aggravated by that condition and its treatment, as supported by the enclosed evidence.

GRAPH ARROW

Read the arrow from the proposed primary condition toward the proposed secondary condition.

INCOMING VIEW

Shows conditions that have been alleged to cause or contribute to the selected condition.

OUTGOING VIEW

Shows conditions that have been claimed secondary to the selected condition.

BOTH DIRECTIONS

Useful for exploration, but your filing must still state one direction for each claimed link.

DIRECTION IS NECESSARY, NOT SUFFICIENT. The claim still needs a current disability and competent evidence applying the medical mechanism to the individual record.

