Azimuth

VETERANS DAY 2026 · KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

You don't have to pay anyone to file your first VA disability claim



Accredited attorneys and claims agents can't charge until VA decides your first claim. VSO representatives never charge. Here's how to check who's accredited and spot a claim shark before you sign anything.

CHECK ACCREDITATION BEFORE YOU SIGN

va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation

01 Your rights: four protections in federal law

01 Help with your first claim is free

Accredited attorneys and claims agents can't charge for help until VA decides your initial claim. VSO representatives don't charge on any claim.

`38 U.S.C. § 5904 · 38 CFR § 14.636`

02 Only accredited people can represent you

Federal law requires VA accreditation to prepare, present, or prosecute your claim. The one exception is one-time help with no fee. VA accredits people, not companies.

`38 U.S.C. § 5901 · 38 CFR §§ 14.629, 14.630`

03 Fees come later, and in writing

After VA's initial decision, an accredited attorney or agent can charge only under a signed, written fee agreement. If VA pays them straight from your back pay, the fee can't top 20%.

`38 CFR § 14.636`

04 You can switch representatives

You can revoke a power of attorney at any time, for any reason, and appoint someone else. Read any fee agreement you signed before you switch.

`38 CFR § 14.631`

02 Check before you sign: three steps

1. **Search**
   Search their name at va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation.
2. **Match**
   Match the name, accreditation type (attorney, claims agent, or VSO representative), and organization to the person helping you.
3. **No result?**
   No result? Don't sign anything, and don't hand over your records or logins.

03 Red flags: five signs of a claim shark

FLAG 01
Promises a specific rating or guaranteed approval

FLAG 02
Charges a fee to file your first claim

FLAG 03
Wants a cut of your future monthly payments

FLAG 04
Asks for your VA.gov, ID.me, or Login.gov password

FLAG 05
Calls themselves a "consultant" who doesn't need accreditation

04 Where to get free, accredited help

Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs)

WHAT YOU GET
Free help on any claim from accredited VSO representatives at groups like DAV, VFW, and The American Legion

HOW TO REACH THEM
va.gov/find-rep

County and state veterans service offices

WHAT YOU GET
Free help from a local service officer

HOW TO REACH THEM
Your county or state veterans affairs office

VA

WHAT YOU GET
Answers about forms, your claim, and its status

HOW TO REACH THEM
VA.gov · 800-827-1000 (TTY: 711)

Find an accredited attorney, claims agent, or VSO representative near you at va.gov/find-rep

05 Report a problem

IF IT'S ABOUT
An accredited attorney, claims agent, or VSO representative

REPORT IT TO
VA Office of General Counsel: ogcaccreditationmailbox@va.gov

IF IT'S ABOUT
A scam or an unaccredited "consultant"

REPORT IT TO
Your state attorney general (naag.org/find-my-ag), the FTC (reportfraud.ftc.gov), or the VA OIG Hotline (**800-488-8244**)

06

Not in VA's search? They can't charge you for help with your claim.



Accredited attorney, claims agent, or VSO representative? Share this with the veterans you serve.

In crisis? Veterans Crisis Line: **dial 988, then press 1.**

About Azimuth

Azimuth

Azimuth is an independent technology platform that connects veterans with VA-accredited attorneys, claims agents, and VSO representatives. Veterans never pay Azimuth. Azimuth isn't a law firm, isn't affiliated with or endorsed by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and doesn't give legal or medical advice. Representation comes from independent accredited representatives.

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