

# USAF INTEGRATED DISABILITY EVALUATION SYSTEM

## FACT SHEET

(February 2015v)

You are receiving this fact sheet because your case has been entered into the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES). **Your PEBLO will keep your commander/first shirt abreast of the status of your case.** The purpose of this fact sheet is to explain your options and what you can expect during each step of the IDES. The IDES is a joint Department of Defense (DoD)/Department of Veterans Administration (DVA) program which was created to improve the transparency of the Disability Evaluation System (DES) and timeliness of the transfer between your military service and receipt of DVA benefits and compensation. In other words, you can expect to receive your post-service DVA benefits much faster, typically within 30 days of separation. There are four main phases under the IDES: The Medical Evaluation Board (MEB) phase, the Physical Evaluation Board (PEB) phase, the Transition phase and the Reintegration phase. Prior to your MEB, you will complete a DVA claim form identifying all conditions incurred during your military service, whether they impact your ability to do your job or not. Your Military Service Coordinator (MSC), a local DVA representative, can help you with the DVA claims process. The VA will perform a medical exam which will be used by the Air Force in determining your fitness for duty and by the VA in determining your disability ratings. The PEB will decide which condition(s) (if any) makes you unfit for continued service and will send the case file to the VA, who will assign your disability ratings. The PEB will then apply the VA ratings to your unfitting conditions. Unless otherwise stated, all 'days' are calendar days.

### PURPOSE OF THE IDES

The purpose of the IDES is to maintain a fit and vital force. To achieve that end, disability law allows the Secretary of the Air Force (SAF) to separate those military members who can no longer perform the duties of their office, grade, rank or rating and to ensure fair compensation to those whose military careers are cut short due to a service-incurred or service-aggravated medical condition.

### MEB PHASE

The MEB phase of the IDES includes activities from the time your physician refers your case to the Military Treatment Facility (MTF) Patient Administration Office to the transfer of your completed MEB case file to the Air Force PEB Administration function. The MEB phase includes the following sub-stages: Referral by your physician, Claim Development with the MSC, Veterans Administration Compensation & Pension (VA C&P)/Disability Benefits Questionnaire (DBQ) disability examination, impartial review, Medical Evaluation Board and determination of the MEB (to include MEB rebuttals). During the MEB phase you may consult with a member of the Office of Airman's Counsel (OAC) at DSN 665-0739 or email [afpcja.disabilitycounsel@us.af.mil](mailto:afpcja.disabilitycounsel@us.af.mil). The lawyers are independent from the DES process and are there to serve as an advocate for you. Your appointed attorney will advise you based on the documentation in your case file. You may either utilize the legal counsel provided or provide counsel of your choosing at your expense. A Right to Counsel Memorandum provided by the OAC will also be given to you.

**REFERRAL TO IDES:** Disability evaluation begins only when examination, treatment, hospitalization, or substandard performance result in referral by your attending physician for an MEB. You will be referred to the Patient Administration Office where you will meet your Physical Evaluation Board Liaison Officer (PEBLO), who will enter you into the DES. Remember the mere presence of a physical defect or condition does not qualify you for disability retirement or discharge. The physical defect or conditions must render you unfit for continued duty. Your signature on the Joint DoD/VA Referral form VA 21-0819, allows you to be seen at the VA and to meet with the VA MSC. All VA appointments are mandatory as are any MEB appointments. If you refuse to sign the Referral form, the VA appointments will still be provided and the MEB will continue; however, you will only be seen for the potentially unfitting military condition(s) and the Referral form will say

“member refuses to sign”. Once you are separated/retired, it will then be your responsibility to file and complete the VA claim.

Please note that if you have a previously approved separation or retirement date, you will remain on duty until the conclusion of the DES process. However, if you are an enlisted member who has reached the end of your active obligated service and you have no remaining service obligations, you may waive referral to the DES with the approval of the Secretary of the Air Force. You must request a waiver, in writing, and such request must attest that you have received counseling on the IDES process. For information on this waiver request process, contact your PEBLO.

**CLAIM DEVELOPMENT.** The PEBLO provides your complete health treatment record and VA Claim Form 21-0819 to the VA Military Services Coordinator (MSC) who will assist you in completing your claim for VA disability benefits. You are required to provide all Service Treatment Records including civilian records to the PEBLO for inclusion in the IDES case file during the claims development stage of IDES. The MSC will request the appropriate appointments with the VA for your C&P/DBQ medical examinations.

**DISABILITY EXAMINATION.** You must complete all VA C&P/DBQ general exams for your referred and claimed conditions.

**MEB.** The MEB consists of three physicians (in the case of mental health condition, a psychiatrist must be present on the Board). The results of the MEB are recorded on an AF Form 618, Medical Board Report, and briefed to you by your PEBLO. Your signature on this form does not mean that you agree with the Board recommendation but that you were informed of the results. If you refuse to sign, your case will still be forwarded to HQ AFPC/DPFD, USAF Physical Disability Division for continued DES processing.

**IMPARTIAL MEDICAL REVIEW ELECTION AND REBUTTAL:** Regardless of the MEB recommendation, you have the right to elect an impartial medical review (IMR) by a physician or other health care professional not directly involved in your MEB. Additionally you have the right to submit a rebuttal to the MEB recommendations. This step is designed to provide you with the opportunity to have an IMR of the medical board recommendations to ensure that the MEB adequately reflects the complete spectrum of your potentially unfitting injuries and/or illnesses.

Once you have been briefed on the complete, signed MEB results, including the completed VA compensation & pension exams, you may submit the IMR to the PEBLO. You have five (5) days to elect one of the three options listed below: **(NOTE: you may bring someone of your choosing with you to any MEB/PEB recommendation briefing).**

1. Elect to not have an IMR nor submit a rebuttal letter to the MEB and allow the case to be forwarded to the IPEB.
2. Submit a Rebuttal Letter to the MEB findings, in which you may disagree with a narrative summary or MEB recommendations, or present extenuating circumstances. **You will have five (5) days to submit your letter.** This will be reviewed by the MEB president. The MEB president has five (5) days to respond to your letter, and will initiate further action, such as additional medical evaluation, if required. The PEBLO will notify you of the response, and both your Rebuttal Letter and the response will be forwarded to AFPC/DPFDD.
3. Elect Impartial Medical Review, with the option of a Rebuttal Letter afterwards. If you request an impartial review, the Military Treatment Facility (MTF) Commander or Medical Director will designate an impartial physician or other appropriate health care professional, not associated with your medical board process. If your PCM wrote the narrative summary, the PCM cannot be the impartial reviewer. The reviewer has five (5) calendar days to complete the review. Upon complete

review of the MEB, the reviewer will contact you to go over the findings of the review, and then will submit the findings in writing to your PEBLO. **If you then wish to submit a Rebuttal Letter to the MEB, you have five (5) calendar days to submit the letter.** The rebuttal will be forwarded to the MEB convening authority for review. The IMR, MEB Rebuttal Letter and the MEB Convening Authority Response will be included in your package forwarded to AFPC/DPFDD.

4. In addition to the options above, the member can always submit a statement letter expressing his/her desire to remain in the service, be separated, or retired; explain how he/she feels about the Air Force; why they elected to join the Air Force, etc.

## **PEB PHASE**

The PEB phase includes the following sub-stages: IPEB, FPEB, Initial Proposed Ratings, Rating Reconsideration, and submission of rebuttals to the Secretary of the Air Force Personnel Council (SAFPC). Note: During the PEB phase you may consult with a member of the Office of Airman's Counsel (OAC) at DSN 665-0739 or email [afpcja.disabilitycounsel@us.af.mil](mailto:afpcja.disabilitycounsel@us.af.mil).

**IPEB.** The IPEB consists of at least two (2) board members, including at least one physician. The IPEB will make a fit/unfit determination. A fit determination will be sent to the PEBLO.

- 1) **If the IPEB finds you are unfit for continued service, they will list the conditions which make you unfit.** The unfit determination will be forwarded to the Department of Veterans Administration Rating Board (DVARB). The Rating Board will prepare a preliminary rating decision for all your referred and claimed conditions and return it to the IPEB. The IPEB will then apply the VA ratings to your unfitting conditions and make one of the following recommendations: Discharge Under Other Than 10 United States Code, Chapter 10 (DUOT). This finding occurs when it is determined the condition(s) for which you are being boarded make you unfit for continued service and Existed Prior to Service (EPTS) or within a period during which you were not entitled to basic pay (i.e., AWOL, not on orders).
  - a. **Discharge With Severance Pay (DWSP).** If the Board determines your condition makes you unfit for service and your disability rating in accordance with guidelines established in the Veterans Administration Schedule for Rating Disabilities (VASRD) is less than 30%, and you have less than 20 years active service, the Board will recommend DWSP. You will be entitled to receive a lump-sum severance pay based on your years of service multiplied by twice the amount of monthly basic pay. The percentage of disability has no effect on the amount of severance pay you will receive. NOTE: ARC members who are recommended for DWSP who have between 15 to 20 years of satisfactory service will be offered the opportunity to select retirement at age 60 in lieu of receiving severance pay.
  - b. **Permanent Retirement (PR).** If the Board determines you are unfit for continued service and the disability rating for your condition(s) is 30% or more or you have 20 or more years of active service and your condition is stable, they will recommend medical retirement. You will receive all entitlements afforded to any member retired from the Armed Forces, including entitlement to a military retired identification (ID) card, medical care, Base Exchange (BX) and commissary privileges, Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) election, etc.
  - c. **Temporary Disability Retirement List (TDRL).** If you suffer from a medical condition that meets the threshold for medical retirement but is considered unstable at the time the IPEB is held, the Board may recommend placement on the TDRL. In this situation, you are essentially in a retired status, and receive the same entitlements as any military member who is permanently retired from active duty. However, while on the TDRL, you are subject to periodic evaluations at least once every 18 months or six (6) months for a mental health condition. Once your

condition has stabilized, the IPEB will either declare you Fit for Duty (you will have the option of reenlistment or to separate without benefits), or recommend Discharge with Severance Pay or Permanent Retirement.

- 2) **OPTIONS FOLLOWING IPEB.** Once briefed on the results of the IPEB by your PEBLO, **you will be allotted 10 calendar days to sign an AF Form 1180** with the following options. You have the right to confer with legal counsel to assist in your decision. If you do not sign the form, your case file will be forwarded to the AF Disability Division for review. Your case may be finalized or forwarded to the FPEB.
- a. You may agree with the findings and recommended disposition of the IPEB and waive the right to a FPEB hearing.
  - b. You may disagree with the findings and recommended disposition of the IPEB other than disability ratings determined by the VA and request a formal hearing of your case. If you request a FPEB hearing, you may not request a one-time VA reconsideration of disability ratings for the IPEB recommended unfitting conditions until after final determination of the findings and recommended disposition. (For Return to Duty Cases Only –justification must accompany your request for a formal hearing and your request may be disapproved.)
  - c. You may concur with the findings and recommended disposition of the IPEB and waive the right to a FPEB hearing, but request a one-time VA reconsideration of disability ratings for the IPEB recommended unfitting conditions. This reconsideration may only occur once final unfit determination is made. In other words, you must either concur with the unfit findings or exhaust the appeal process before the reconsideration request can be processed. The VA will only reconsider those conditions deemed unfitting by the PEB (Category I). All other disability ratings may be readdressed following your separation/retirement from active service. You must submit documentation in support of your request or reconsideration will not be given. Your PEBLO and MSC will assist you in preparing your reconsideration paperwork which will accompany the AF Form 1180. Your request will be forwarded to the DVARB for review. The IPEB will then review the rating board’s decision and provide a final recommendation.
  - d. **LIMITED ASSIGNMENT STATUS (LAS).** If you have between 15 and 19 years of service and are motivated to remain on active duty even though found unfit by the PEB, you may apply to be retained on active duty under the LAS program. This program allows the Air Force to keep **needed** experience and skills. To apply for LAS, **you must first be found unfit by a PEB and concur with that finding.** Then, if you meet the eligibility criteria, you must submit a formal request for this status. Due to the unique requirements of the Reserve and Guard components, ARC members are not eligible to apply for LAS. Additionally, if you are recommended for Temporary Disability Retirement (TDRL), you are not eligible to apply for LAS as your condition is considered unstable. Under the LAS program, eligible members may be retained if they meet all of the following requirements:
    1. Have accepted an unfit finding by a Physical Evaluation Board and applied for LAS.
    2. Have a stable unfitting condition.
    3. Can be maintained in the military environment without adversely affecting themselves or their co-workers.
    4. Will not require inordinate medical care.

5. Have expertise in a specialty that the Air Force needs

If approved for LAS, you must undergo an annual physical examination and may require an MEB (and PEB) based on the results of the examination and the continued need for your grade and specialty.

Members retained in LAS will not be held on active duty past 20 years of active service. Individuals retained in LAS do not have to overcome the presumption of fitness when they approach their normal separation or retirement dates. A full MEB will be accomplished to determine your final disposition. (permanent retirement or return to duty).

**FPEB.** If you do not agree with the IPEB findings and recommended fit/unfit disposition, you will be scheduled for a hearing before the FPEB. The hearing will typically be held within 30 days of your non-concurrence. The FPEB consists of three board members, one of whom is a physician, and is held at JBSA-Randolph AFB TX.

- 1) FPEB Counsel. If you have not already contacted OAC at the beginning of the MEB process, you are encouraged to contact the OAC at DSN 665-0739 or email [afpcja.disabilitycounsel@us.af.mil](mailto:afpcja.disabilitycounsel@us.af.mil). The lawyers are independent from the FPEB and are there to serve as an advocate for you. Your appointed attorney will advise you based on the documentation in your case file, your proposed testimony, any new or additional documentation you desire to submit or witness you want to call for consideration. You may either utilize the legal counsel provided or provide counsel of your choosing at your expense. If, after speaking to the lawyers, you choose to change your mind and accept the IPEB findings, you may request to waive the FPEB. The FPEB President has the final authority to either allow the waiver or proceed with the hearing.
- 2) TDY Orders. If you decide to appear before the FPEB, you will be provided TDY orders to arrive approximately three days prior to the hearing. This will allow you time to confer with legal counsel to prepare your case. Any witnesses you desire to have testify on your behalf will travel at your expense.
- 3) FPEB Hearing Procedures. The Formal hearing is in a court room-like setting, with only the FPEB members, you and your counsel present. The hearing will be recorded. Once your hearing is complete, the FPEB will meet in private chambers prior to making a recommendation on your case. The FPEB may either uphold the IPEB findings or make a different recommendation. You will be briefed on their findings and provided one duty day to either agree or disagree with their findings.
- 4) OPTIONS FOLLOWING THE FPEB.
  - a. You may agree with the findings and recommended disposition of the FPEB and waive the right to submit a rebuttal to the SAFPC. Your case file will be sent to the Chief, USAF Physical Disability Division, HQ AFPC/DPPD, for finalization. There are four personnel in DPPD sworn to act on behalf of the Secretary of the Air Force regarding disability matters. They will review the findings of both the IPEB and FPEB and either approve the findings of the FPEB or forward your case to the SAFPC for review and final disposition if they feel it is in the best interest of either you or the Air Force.
  - b. You may concur with the findings and recommended disposition of the FPEB and waive the right to submit a rebuttal to the SAFPC, but request a one-time VA reconsideration of disability ratings for unfitting conditions. You must submit documentation in support of a reconsideration request and a cover letter explaining what you wish the VA to reconsider. The cover letter

assists the VA in their review. The VA will only reconsider evaluations of ratings if new medical evidence is received, or you are able to provide sufficient evidence of an error to warrant the reconsideration. The MSC and the PEBLO can help you in the preparation of your reconsideration request.

- c. You may nonconcur with the findings and recommended disposition of the FPEB and submit a rebuttal to the SAFPC. You may also request a one-time VA reconsideration of disability ratings for unfitting conditions with the understanding that your rating reconsideration request will be held until after receipt of the SAFPC decision. When required, you must submit documentation in support of your rating request or reconsideration will not be given. Your PEBLO and MSC will assist you in preparing your reconsideration paperwork. Your request will be forwarded to the DVARB for review. The SAFPC will then review the rating board's decision and provide a final recommendation.

**APPEAL TO SAFPC.** If you disagree with the FPEB, your case will be forwarded for a review by the SAFPC. The SAFPC is the final board of appeal for members being processed through the IDES. You may choose to submit a rebuttal to be forwarded with your case file to the SAFPC. If you desire to submit a rebuttal, you must do so within 10 calendar days of your request to appeal. The SAFPC will review your case file, an audio transcript of your formal hearing, and your written rebuttal and make a final disposition. The SAFPC may concur with the findings of the previous boards or make an alternate determination. HQ AFPC/DPPD will be notified and you will be informed of the disposition, along with your date of separation or retirement, if applicable, through your local PEBLO.

## **TRANSITION PHASE**

**Transition spans the time from when** you are informed of your final disability disposition decision to your date of final out-processing or Return to Duty..

**PROCESSING FOR RETURN TO DUTY:** your case file will be forwarded to the Medical Standards Branch for possible determination of an Assignment Limitation Code "C". (NOTE: ARC members who are recommended for Return to Duty may be "C" coded, removed from orders and/or retired/separated by HQ AFRC/SG or ARPC/DPTOT or HQ NGB/SG or A1PS.)

### **PROCESSING FOR SEPARATION/RETIREMENT:**

- 1) **Date of Separation/Retirement.** In keeping with the intent to reduce any "gaps" in benefit eligibility when transitioning from the Air Force to the VA, retirement/separation dates will fall three days prior to the last day of the month. The time from the date your case is finalized (published order) to the date of retirement/separation should allow sufficient time for out-processing, any permissive TDY granted by your commander, and use of any unsold leave. You may request an earlier separation/retirement date through your PEBLO at the time of your concurrence with the IPEB or FPEB or when briefed of the final disposition. If you request a separation/retirement date of less than 30 days, your request must be routed through your MPF for their endorsement. The MPF is responsible for ensuring all out processing and briefings can be completed by your requested earlier date. **Once a date has been established, the USAF Physical Disability Division may only approve changes to the retirement or separation date in cases where you can show an unusual personal hardship.** Both your PEBLO and your Military Personnel Section (MPS) will receive a copy of the separation message.

## 2) Grade Determination.

a) **For Retirement.** Unless entitled to a higher retired grade under some other provision of law, you will be medically retired in the highest of the following grades:

- i) The grade in which you were serving on the date placed on the TDRL or on the date permanently retired for disability.
- ii) The Reserve grade you held at the time of retirement if it is higher than the grade in which serving on active duty. The Reserve grade must be a valid USAFR or ANG grade that is still in effect at the time of retirement.
- iii) A higher grade in which you serve satisfactorily on active duty as determined by the SAF.
- iv) If selected (officer) for promotion or your line number (enlisted) is prior to the date of the SAF memorandum approving your retirement, you may be retired in the regular or Reserve grade to which you had been selected and would have been promoted had it not been for the physical disability for which you are being retired.

b) **For Separation.** The discharge grade will be the higher of the following:

- i) The grade in which you are serving at the time of discharge.
- ii) A grade in which you served satisfactorily on active duty, as determine by the SAF.
- iii) If selected (officer) for promotion or your line number (enlisted) is prior to the date of the SAF memorandum approving your discharge, you may be discharged in the regular or Reserve grade to which you had been selected and would have been promoted had it not been for the physical disability for which you are being separated.

3) **Pay Computation** AFTER your retirement the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)-Cleveland Center is responsible for your final retired pay computations. DFAS will send you an explanation of how they computed your retired pay and you will have 45 days to contest their computation. You may contact them for more information using their toll free number at 1-800-321-1080. BEFORE your retirement date you can email [disability@us.af.mil](mailto:disability@us.af.mil) for pay questions.

**a) RETIRED PAY COMPUTATION.** If you are retired for disability, your retired pay is computed based on your years of creditable service or percent of disability, whichever is most advantageous to you. Creditable service for Regular Air Force members is active duty service time; for Air Reserve Component members it is total retirement points divided by 360. If using creditable service, the calculation is to multiply 2.5% times your years of service, then times the retired pay base. Using the disability rating, multiply the percent of total disability reflected on AF Form 356 times the retired pay base.

i) **Retired Pay Base.** If you entered military service prior to 8 Sep 80, the retired pay base is equal to your monthly base pay for the grade in which you are retiring. If you entered military service on or after 8 Sep 80, the retired pay base is an average of the monthly base pay for any 36 months of your service--normally the 36 months when pay was highest (Title 10 USC 1401 and 1407). If you have less than 36 months of service, the retired pay base will be an average of your base pay for the total period of service.

ii) **Tax Exemption.** In accordance with Title 26 U.S.C. 104, disability retirement pay is taxable unless (a) on 24 Sep 75, you had military Service affiliation (Active, Reserve, or was under a binding written agreement for such service); or, (b) your disability is determined to be combat-related under AFI 36-3212, Chapter 3. If you meet the tax exemption criteria, only that portion of retired pay that is directly attributable to your disability percentage is non-taxable.

iii) Retired Pay While on TDRL. If you are placed on the TDRL, your retired pay is computed the same as that of a permanently retired member. You will receive at least 50 percent but not more than 75 percent of your retired pay base even though your disability rating may be less than 50 percent. As long as you remain on the TDRL, your retired pay will not change, except for cost of living increases. This is true even if the disability rating changes as the result of subsequent periodic examinations.

b) **DISABILITY SEVERANCE PAY COMPUTATION.** If you are discharged with entitlement to disability severance pay, you will receive a lump sum severance payment equal to 2 months of base pay for each year of service, up to 19 years, but not less than 3 years for non-combat related conditions and not less than 6 years for combat related conditions. There is no maximum dollar amount for disability severance pay. For the purpose of computing severance pay, a part of a year of active service that is six months or more is counted as a whole year, and a part of a year that is less than six months is disregarded. For example, if you have 2 years, 7 months active service, you are credited with 3 years of service when computing severance pay. For Air Reserve Component members, years of service is computed as retirement points divided by 360.

i) **Tax Exemption.** Disability severance pay is taxable income, and therefore, federal income tax will be withheld. You may obtain a refund of withheld taxes if: 1) on September 24, 1975, you were a member of a Uniformed Service or were under a binding written commitment, 2) your condition is combat related, or 3) you have official notification from the VA approving entitlement to disability compensation for the same illness or injury that caused the entitlement to disability severance pay. If you receive your VA rating in the same calendar year of your separation, you may obtain a refund of the withheld money from DFAS sending them a copy of the VA rating letter along with a copy of the AF Form 356. While not required, it helps to also send a copy of the DD Form 214. If you don't receive a VA rating in the same year of separation, you must receive the refund directly from the IRS as part of income tax filing for that calendar year. Additionally, your VA compensation may be offset by the amount of severance pay you received. For example, if you received \$1000 severance pay, the VA may withhold \$1000 before beginning compensation benefits.

If your condition is determined to be combat related in accordance with title 26 U.S.C. and/or to have been incurred in a combat zone, your disability pay is non-taxable. Your VA compensation will not be offset. For example, if you received \$1000 severance pay, the VA will not withhold \$1000 before beginning your compensation benefits.

c) **CONCURRENT RETIREMENT AND DISABILITY PAY (CRDP, CONCURRENT RECEIPT).** Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay (CRDP) allows military retirees to receive both military retired pay and Veterans Affairs (VA) compensation. This was prohibited until the CRDP program began on January 1, 2004. You must be eligible for retired pay to qualify for CRDP. If you were placed on a disability retirement, but would be eligible for military retired pay in the absence of the disability, you may be entitled to receive CRDP. You do not need to apply for CRDP. If qualified, you will be enrolled automatically. You may be entitled to CRDP if...

- You are a regular retiree with a VA disability rating of 50 percent or greater.
- You are a reserve retiree with 20 qualifying years of service, who has a VA disability rating of 50 percent or greater and who has reached retirement age. (In most cases the retirement age for reservists is 60, but certain reserve retirees may be eligible before they turn 60. If you are a member of the Ready Reserve, your retirement age can be reduced below age 60 by three months for each 90 days of active service you have performed during a fiscal year.)



- You are retired under Temporary Early Retirement Act (TERA) and have a VA disability rating of 50 percent or greater.
- You are a disability retiree who earned entitlement to retired pay under any provision of law other than solely by disability, and you have a VA disability rating of 50 percent or greater. You might become eligible for CRDP at the time you would have become eligible for retired pay.

3) **VA VERSUS AIR FORCE DISABILITY.** As a matter of information, you should be aware of the differences between the Air Force and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability programs. The Air Force and the VA are separate government agencies which operate under different laws and policies. The findings of the two agencies frequently differ because the VA may compensate for any service-connected physical or mental condition listed in the VASRD, whereas the Air Force may only compensate for those conditions which render you unfit for further military service. For this reason, it is not unusual for the military and VA total disability ratings to differ.

4) **VA BENEFITS.** Whether you are retired or discharged for disability, you may be eligible for VA benefits, such as life insurance, medical care, prescription medication, hospitalization, educational benefits, survivor's benefits, etc. Additional information concerning VA benefits is available in a pamphlet called "Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents" which can be obtained through your local VA office, or can be viewed at the VA website <http://www.va.gov>. Information regarding the VA can be found at their website at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov).

VA determination of service connection for disabilities may be established from the day following the date of discharge from the Air Force. Entitlement to payment, however, is not authorized until the first of the month following the month in which service connection is established. VA compensation is paid, like military pay, in arrears. Because of these rules, a separation date other than the last day of the month will result in a delay in the receipt of VA payments.

5) **BOARD FOR CORRECTION OF MILITARY RECORD (BCMR).** **Once your case has been finalized,** if you feel an error or injustice occurred during the processing or finalization of your case, you may apply to the AFBCMR. The AFBCMR, the highest level of administrative appeal in the Air Force, will carefully consider your petition and make recommendations as it deems appropriate to the Secretary of the Air Force. Please be aware that submission of an application should not be interpreted as an automatic approval.

6) **PRESEPARATION AND TAP BRIEFING.** It is important for you to attend your Pre-Separation and TAP Briefings as they will provide you important information regarding post retirement insurance, allotments, potential veteran benefits, applicable transition benefits, services provided by military/veteran/national service organization, electronic resources for ill/injured services members, and more.

### **REINTEGRATION PHASE**

Once you have separated from the service, within 30-60 days, you will receive your permanent VA rating, VA Benefits Letter and begin receive your VA compensation.

We hope this information assists you in understanding the DES process. Should you have any questions, please contact your local PEBLO.

**HELPFUL WEB SITES:**

[www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) (Veterans Administration)

<https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx> (Defense Finance Accounting System My Pay)

<http://www.retirees.af.mil/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=11712> (AF Survivor Benefit Program)

[www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/index.html](http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/index.html) (National Personnel Records Center)

<https://www.disability.gov/resource/2014-dod-compensation-benefits-handbook/>

<http://www.dfas.mil/dfas/retiredmilitary.html> On the left side are the links for Plan for Retirement, Disability Entitlements – which includes links to Disability Retirement; Combat Related Special Compensation; and Concurrent Retirement Disability Pay –AKA Concurrent Receipt