



American Legion Post 100 Fact Sheet

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Disability Compensation For Conditions Related to Military Sexual Trauma (MST)!

Disabilities determined by VA to be related to your military service can lead to a monthly non-taxable compensation, enrollment in the VA health care system, a 10-point hiring preference for federal employment, and other important benefits.

Ask your VA representative or Veterans Service Organization representative about Disability Compensation, Pension, Health Care Caregiver Program, Career Services, Educational Assistance, Home Loan Guaranty, Insurance and/or Dependents and Survivors Benefits.

Some Veterans may have experienced sexual trauma while serving in the military. These kinds of experiences can affect Veterans' mental and physical health, even many years later. Veterans can apply for disability compensation for any current difficulties that are related to their service, including difficulties related to MST.

The VA has military sexual trauma coordinators at local regional benefit offices who can assist Veterans. The list of coordinators is located here,

<http://www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/mstcoordinators.asp>

How Does VA Define Military Sexual Trauma?

MST is defined by Title 38 U.S. Code 1720D as "psychological trauma resulting from a physical assault of a sexual nature, battery of a sexual nature, or sexual harassment which occurred while the Veteran was serving on active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training." Sexual harassment is defined as "repeated, unsolicited verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature which is threatening in character."

Are Veterans Granted Disability Compensation For MST?

Veterans are not granted compensation for the traumatic event itself, but can be granted disability compensation for conditions that result from MST.

Can You Develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Or Other Mental Health Disorders as a Result of MST?

Yes.

Exposure to any trauma can potentially result in PTSD or another mental health disorder. PTSD is the most common mental health diagnosis related to experiencing MST.

What Evidence Can Support a Disability Claim for PTSD as a Result of MST?

Department of Defense forms used in reporting incidents of sexual assault or harassment, as well as investigative reports during military service are direct evidence to support these claims. However, VA knows that events involving sexual trauma are not always officially reported. Therefore, for PTSD claims related to MST VA has relaxed the evidentiary requirements and looks for “markers” (i.e., signs, events, or circumstances) that provide some indication that the traumatic event happened. These include, but are not limited to:

- Records from law enforcement authorities, rape crisis centers, mental health counseling centers, hospitals, or physicians
- Pregnancy tests or tests for sexually transmitted diseases
- Statements from family members, roommates, fellow Service members, clergy members, or counselors
- Requests for transfer to another military duty assignment
- Deterioration in work performance
- Substance abuse
- Episodes of depression, panic attacks, or anxiety without an identifiable cause
- Unexplained economic or social behavioral changes
- Relationship issues, such as divorce
- Sexual dysfunction

VA Relaxed The Standards Of Evidence For Combat Related PTSD. Are The Standards Of Evidence for MST – Related PTSD Claims More Stringent Than Other PTSD Claims?

No.

In fact, VA relaxed its evidentiary standard for disability claims related to MST in 2002 to ensure all available evidence supporting these claims is considered. Because military service records may lack corroborating evidence that a stressful event occurred, VA regulations make clear that evidence from non-military sources may be used to corroborate the Veteran’s account of the MST. Further, when direct evidence of an MST is not available, VA may request a medical opinion to consider a Veteran’s account and any “markers” to corroborate the occurrence of the MST event as related to current PTSD symptoms.