

200,000 Veterans Expected to File Claims Under New Agent Orange Presumptives – The VA has announced an aggressive new initiative to solicit private sector input on a proposed “fast track” Veterans’ claims process for service-connected presumptive illnesses due to Agent Orange exposure during the Vietnam War. Over the next two years, about 200,000 Veterans are expected to file disability compensation claims under an historic expansion of three new presumptive illnesses announced last year by Secretary Shinseki. They include Veterans who have Parkinson’s disease, ischemic heart disease and B-cell leukemias. In practical terms, Veterans who served in Vietnam during the war and who have one of the illnesses covered by the “presumption of service connection” don’t have to prove an association between their medical problems and military service. This “presumption” makes it easier for Vietnam Veterans to access disability compensation benefits. Along with the publication of proposed regulations for the three new presumptives this spring, the VA intends to publish a formal request in *Federal Business Opportunities* for private-sector corporations to propose automated solutions for the parts of the claims process that take the longest amount of time. The VA believes these can be collected in a more streamlined and accurate way.

Development involves determining what additional information is needed to adjudicate the claim, such as military and private medical records and the scheduling of medical examinations. With this new approach, the VA expects to shorten the time it takes to gather evidence, which now takes on average over 90 days. Once the claim is fully developed and all pertinent information is gathered, the VA will be able to more quickly decide the claim and process the award if granted. The contract is expected to be awarded in April with proposed solutions offered to the VA within 90-days. Implementation of the solution is expected within 150 days. Additional information about Agent Orange and VA’s services and programs for Veterans exposed are available at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange.

Web site: <http://mva.sd.gov>