

## Disability Evaluation System

Whether in combat operations or training, Marines may incur a wound, illness or injury that has a long-term impact on their lives. Exceptional medical care and adequate healing time enables most Marines to return to a full duty status. In the instances when a Marine is unable to return to full and unrestricted duty, the Disability Evaluation System (DES) is necessary to determine their fitness for continued military service. The two most common DES processes are the integrated disability evaluation system (IDES) and legacy disability evaluation system.

**A recovering service member (RSM) should be referred to the DES when the medical impairments impact the ability to perform military duties appropriate to their office, grade, rank, or rating.**

### Integrated Disability Evaluation System

The IDES is a joint program of the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). For RSMs determined medically unfit for continued service, the goal is to close the gap between separation from active duty and the receipt of VA benefits and compensation. The VA performs one medical exam that meets the needs of DoD in determining fitness for continued military service and also provides the basis for the VA to rate the RSM's disabilities if they have been determined to be unfit by the Department of the Navy Physical Evaluation Board (PEB). The VA determined disability rating, for the specifically military unfitting condition(s), is used by DoD as the basis for determining eligibility for military separation and retirement benefits.

### Referral to the IDES

The mere presence of a medical condition or impairment is not enough to decide that a RSM should be referred to the IDES or to determine that they are unfit and entitled to disability benefits if referred. Once referred to the IDES, a RSM's IDES case will be managed by a physical evaluation board liaison officer (PEBLO). PEBLO's develop and process IDES case files, and conduct all aspects of IDES counseling from IDES referral until final disposition.

The PEBLO is the primary point of contact throughout the entire IDES process.

### More Information:

For information about referring overseas Marines to the DES, contact Headquarters Marine Corps disability section for separations and retirements at:

**703.784.9308 (ext. 9309/9321)**

### Related Fact Sheets

- Wounded Warrior Regiment Call Center
- Medical Section
- Transition
- Recovery Care Coordinator

### Additional Tools

Find these additional tools located on the Wounded Warrior Regiment website for more information on the IDES process:

- IDES Toolkit

### New DES Initiatives

A recent process improvement initiative has resulted in an intended reduction in the processing time of an IDES case from the previous 295 day goal to the current goal of 230 days.

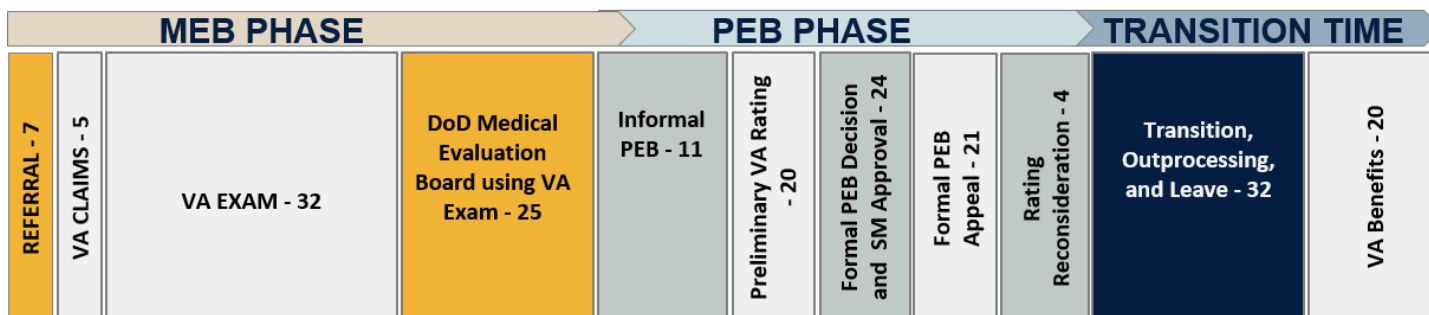
**Wounded Warrior Call Center 24/7—1.877.487.6299**

**Stay Connected—[www.woundedwarrior.marines.mil](http://www.woundedwarrior.marines.mil)**



## IDES Timeline

The IDES has four phases: Medical Evaluation Board (MEB), Physical Evaluation Board (PEB), Transition, and VA Disability Compensation Benefits Phase totaling 230 days. Following an injury or illness, an appropriate period of time (typically 12 months) is allotted each RSM to receive treatment and hopefully, to rehabilitate and recover. Those who are unable to return to full duty are referred to the IDES.



\*The IDES Timeline follows the three phases: MEB, PEB, and Transition Phase.

## MEB Phase

### What happens after the referral?

The RSM will be assigned a PEBLO, located in the Medical Boards section of the military treatment facility (MTF), who will develop the VA Claim (Part 1 of the VA Claim Form 21-0819). PEBLOs will consult with all medical specialists to determine which medical condition(s) should be included. The RSM will be referred to a VA claims development representative, the Military Service Coordinator (MSC) who counsels them on the VA portion of IDES and assists them in completing parts II-IV of the claim. Additionally, the MSC will schedule all VA medical exams required for the IDES process. In addition to the MEB referred conditions the Marine may claim disability for any service incurred or aggravated medical conditions.

### Physical examination, specialty examination, diagnostic testing, laboratory test

Examinations (including laboratory and diagnostic tests) are completed by a combination of military, VA, or authorized civilian medical providers. Results are summarized in the narrative summary (NARSUM). The DoD MTF is responsible for the production of the NARSUM and Medical Evaluation Board Report (also referred to as the IDES case file). The PEBLO oversees the final assembly of all components of the case filed and delivers to the local MTF convened Medical Evaluation Board (MEB).

### Documents contained in IDES case file

#### Typical Medical Evidence:

- A narrative summary (NARSUM)
- History and treatment of the specific injury or illness
- Laboratory results
- All referrals to doctors and sick call (health record)
- Type and frequency of medication
- Results of physical exam completed within past six months
- All addendums from specialty clinics

#### Typical Non-Medical Evidence:

- RSM personal impact statement
- Non-medical assessment from the RSM's Command (impact of medical condition(s) on normal military duties)
- Personnel record including evaluations and awards
- Line of duty (misconduct) investigations
- Personnel casualty report (PCR) as applicable
- Line of Duty Benefits Letter (applies to reservist only)
- Medical Hold Orders (applies to reservist only)

### Medical Evaluation Board Determination

The MEB consists of two to three medical officers appointed by the local MTF Commander. They review the IDES case file to determine appropriate diagnosis and ability to return to full, unrestricted duty. If the RSM is expected to recover and return to full duty, the MEB may recommend placing them on temporary limited duty (TLD) for a specific time frame, after which the RSM must return to full duty. Otherwise, the RSM will be referred to the Physical Evaluation Board (PEB) phase.

## PEB Phase

### Informal Physical Evaluation Board

The PEB Informal Physical Evaluation Board (IPEB) reviews all the evidence contained in the IDES case file, to include the RSM's entire medical record to make a fitness determination and record their finding on the following:

- Determine if the medical condition(s) was incurred in the line of duty
- Determine if RSM is fit or unfit for continued service
- Recommend return to duty if found fit; or if found unfit:
  - Identify the specific military unfitting medical condition(s)
  - Recommend separation from active duty with final disposition based on the degree of disability (percentage awarded by VA) for the military unfitting medical conditions
  - Determine if the military unfitting conditions were incurred as the result of a combat related event, and/or in a combat zone
  - Forward the case to the VA Disability Rating Activity Site (D-RAS) to determine degree of disability for each condition claimed.

### Veterans Administration Disability Rating Activity Site

The VA Disability Rating Activity Site (D-RAS) thoroughly evaluates the RSM's referred and claimed conditions to produce a rating letter that explains the disability rating applied. Each condition is rated from zero to 100 percent and results are submitted to IPEB. The IPEB and D-RAS findings are merged and submitted to the PEBLO for delivery to the RSM

*If the RSM is found unfit, they have three options:*

- 1) Accept the findings of the IPEB and the VA rating decision
- 2) Accept the findings of the IPEB and request a one time reconsideration of the VA rating decision; or
- 3) Disagree with the findings and request or demand a Formal Physical Evaluation Board

### Formal Physical Evaluation Board

All RSMs found unfit by the IPEB have the right to a formal hearing. Upon approval and scheduling, the Navy will assign a Navy Judge Advocate General's Corps attorney to the RSM. The RSM may choose a non-military attorney, but they will be responsible for any costs. The attorney will prepare the petition, gather evidence and present their case to the Formal Physical Evaluation Board (FPEB). Once the case has been presented, the board deliberates and prepares a findings letter with written rationale. Any previous IPEB findings are null and void. The findings and rationale are reviewed by the Department of the Navy PEB President before being released to the RSM. These findings become the decision of record.

*Why would a RSM request FPEB review?*

Generally RSMs request the FPEB for two reasons:

1. To challenge their fitness determination.
2. To add other claimed and rated conditions that were not on the IDES referral that may be unfitting. (This may result in a higher combined disability rating that could qualify the Marine for disability retirement versus a disability separation).

102 Day Goal

32 Day Goal

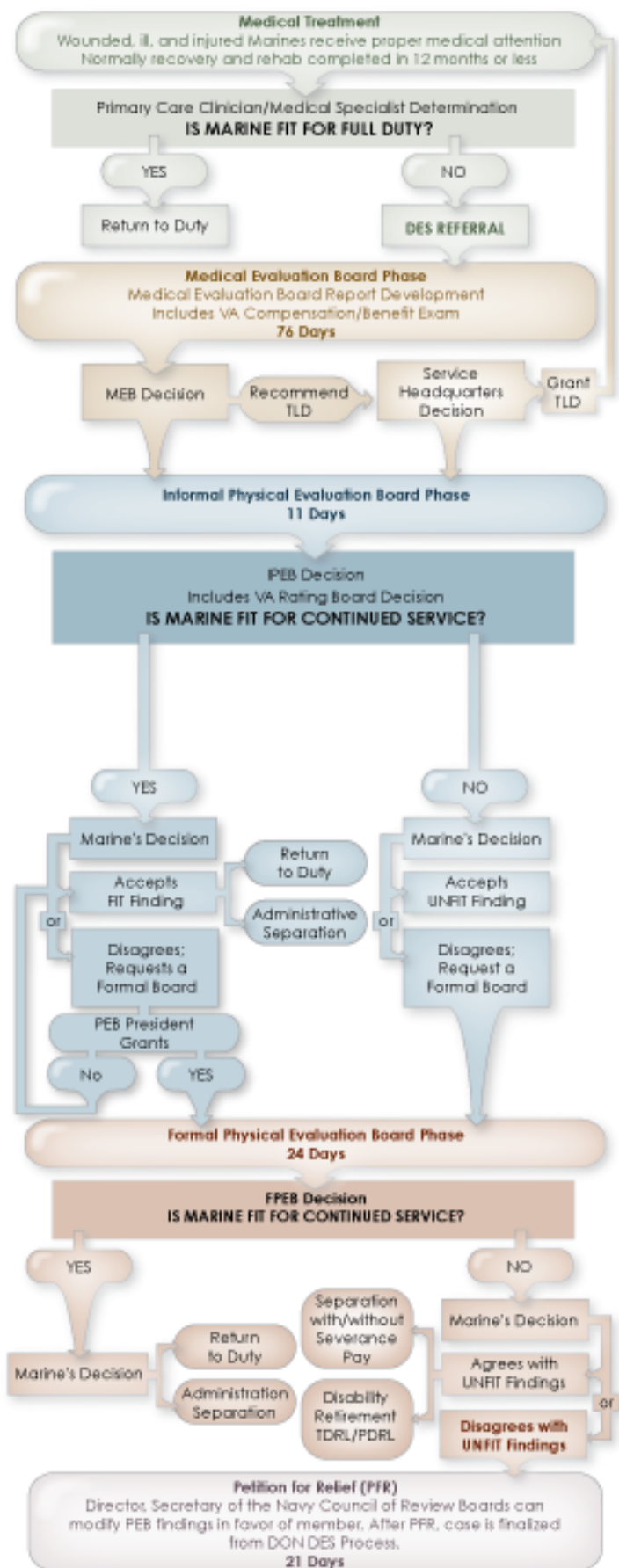
## Transition Phase

Transition begins after the RSM accepts the PEB findings or completes formal and military appeals. At this point, the VA is informed of the final disposition, receives a copy of the separation orders and DD Form 214, and conducts a final interview with the RSM, their dependents, or other representatives to determine entitlement to benefits; gather supporting documentary evidence, and file claims on behalf of the RSM for benefits allowable under state and federal law. The MSC will meet with the RSM and their family through an edit interview to explain options and what the RSM should expect from the VA upon separation.

## VA Disability Benefits Delivery

The goal of the IDES is to ensure RSMs and their families receive a seamless transition from DoD to VA benefits, resources, and care. After the RSM's DD Form 214 is received and processed, benefits are typically received within 30 days of the actual discharge date. Disability compensation varies with the degree of disability and the number of veteran's dependents, and is paid monthly.

## IDES Process Chart



### Reconsideration of the VA D-RAS Determinations

If a RSM believes that an error was made in determining their rating, they may notify their PEBLO and request a one-time reconsideration by the VA. The rating reconsideration will be processed through the PEB. The VA D-RAS will only reconsider the evaluation of a rating if new medical evidence is received, or the RSM is able to provide sufficient evidence of an error to warrant reconsideration. Only one reconsideration is made for each military unfitting condition. If a new condition is found to be unfitting, by the PEB during the Formal PEB phase, reconsideration can be requested; even if other conditions have been previously reconsidered.

### Petition for Relief (if requested)

If the RSM disagrees with the FPEB findings, he or she has 15 days to submit a petition for relief (PFR) to the Director, Secretary of the Navy Council of Review Boards through their legal counsel. The director has the authority to modify the PEB findings such as overturning a finding of unfit to fit. This is the last opportunity for an in-service appeal. The RSM should expect a 30 day turn around for appeal processing.

### Permanent Limited Duty

A request to remain on active duty in a PLD/EPLD status is NOT a part of the MEB/PEB process. A RSM must coordinate with their limited duty coordinator to complete the request through their chain of command. Final approval for PLD/EPLD is granted by headquarters Marine Corps. To be eligible for PLD/EPLD a RSM must first accept the unfit findings of the PEB. RSMs determined fit can NOT request PLD/EPLD.

### Disability Evaluation System Outreach Program

The Navy and Marine Corps have dedicated attorneys to assist Marines throughout the IDES process (in some cases, even as early as the Medical Evaluation Board stage). Such assistance may be limited, depending on the circumstances.

**For more information, please visit:**

[http://www.hqmc.marines.mil/sja/branches/disabilityevaluationsystem\(DES\)outreachcounsel.aspx](http://www.hqmc.marines.mil/sja/branches/disabilityevaluationsystem(DES)outreachcounsel.aspx)