

Medical Opinion Checklist

J. Rice Portfolio Sample

Getting Started

Preparing for a Medical Opinion

- Identify and understand the question(s) presented on the order request.
 - It may be helpful to number all questions asked on the order request and to answer them in order.
 - There are often only very subtle differences between the multitude of medical opinions the VA may request for one condition. Ensure you read each requested opinion carefully and understand exactly what each question is asking.
- Review the Veteran's medical records (claims file) and any relevant evidence identified by the VA.
 - Identify pertinent information from the claims file that will help you address the requested opinion(s).
 - It may be helpful to take your own notes when reviewing the claims file. For example, notating the pages of possibly pertinent documents can help you quickly return to those documents, if needed, when forming your rationale.
 - Take note of non-medical information that may be pertinent to the Veteran's claim such as; age, gender, military occupation specialty (MOS), badges, medals, length of service and deployment locations.
- Review corresponding DBQ(s)
 - Ensure you carefully review your responses across documentation to ensure there is no contradiction. An example of a common contradiction would be indicating a Veteran does not have a condition on the knee DBQ, and then providing a positive medical opinion indicating the claimed knee condition was related to service.

Completing the Medical Opinion DBQ

Evidence Review

- Document pertinent records reviewed to demonstrate to the VA that you have considered all relevant information related to the Veteran's claim.
 - When documenting pertinent records, include the source, date and a brief summary:

Nexus Statement

- Choose the nexus statement that best approximates the etiology of the claimed condition.
 - For VA purposes, if the condition developed, was diagnosed or became symptomatic during service, then you would affirm that the condition was due to military service.
 - Weigh all of the evidence and draw upon your clinical expertise when determining the appropriate nexus statement.

Rationale

- Provide a clear, comprehensive supporting rationale. The rationale must be a summary of your thought process that explains how you came to your given conclusion (nexus statement).
 - Your rationale will demonstrate that all pertinent facts were considered in the formation of your opinion.
 - Cite peer reviewed medical literature, when applicable, to support your opinion.
 - Before submitting, review your work to ensure you have addressed all aspects of the requested opinion(s) and your responses are consistent across all documentation related to the Veteran's claim.