

## The Medical Nexus Letter

A nexus letter is an essential element of a successful Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) compensation claim. It should be written by the veteran's primary care provider or a specialist in the field if a specialist treated the veteran for the particular disability. A nexus letter consists of two parts: a medical opinion that connects the current diagnosed disability with an injury, event, or environment which the veteran was subjected to during active military service, and a medical reason supporting this opinion.

Although in most cases the medical professional was not a witness to the veteran's military service, VA requires an opinion on the likelihood that the disability is a result of something that took place while the veteran was in the military. The veteran should provide the medical professional any available medical records from both during and after military service to assist the professional in obtaining an accurate history of the disability.

The beginning of a nexus letter is called the nexus statement and should be similar to the following:

*"I am {Insert medical professional's name and title} and I have examined the veteran {Insert veteran's name} for his/her diagnosed {Insert disability name} It is my professional medical opinion that the current disability that {Insert veteran's name} is suffering from is at least as likely as not either incurred by or aggravated by injuries or activities that occurred during active military service.*

"At least as likely as not" places the probability of connection at 50%. Given that equilibrium, the Department of Veterans Affairs should grant benefits for the disability being sought unless there are other non-medical factors that would prevent this. "At least as likely as not" is used as the minimum threshold for medical nexus statements. If the medical professional feels that there is more than a 50% chance that the disability is related to the veteran's active duty military service, they may use a more definitive statement such as "more likely than not".

Along with the above mentioned nexus statement, the nexus letter must also include a medical reason as to why the disability is related to the veteran's active duty military service. This is known as a rationale. The rationale can be discovered or proven by using medical tests, records, examinations, or medical research. It is extremely important to know that in most cases, a nexus statement without a rationale will not be sufficient to grant benefits for a disability. Therefore, we always recommend that a rationale be provided along with the nexus letter.

If the medical professional determines that they cannot provide a medical nexus, they should inform the veteran and explain why a nexus cannot be written so that the veteran and their representative can use that information to determine the best course of action for the claim.

