

SERVICE STANDARDS FOR VETERANS

- The Government is working to ensure Veterans and their families are always treated fairly – and with care, compassion and respect when accessing programs and services.
- Since 2016, the government has invested over \$10-billion for Veterans.
- Veterans Affairs Canada has seen a 40% increase in disability benefit applications (first applications, reassessments and departmental reviews) since 2016. This includes an increase of more than 75% in first applications for disability benefits.
- We are taking a hard look at the entire disability application process and are working to implement further measures to reduce the backlog and improve results by hiring more frontline staff and simplifying the decision-making process.
- A Wait Time Tool was introduced in December 2018 so that Veterans can see the average processing time for Veterans Affairs Canada programs and services.
- Veterans Affairs Canada routinely reviews its service standards to ensure they are useful to Veterans and other clients. With feedback from Veterans, and the evolution of Veterans Affairs Canada programs and benefits, it is to be expected that a number of service standards will be revised and new ones will be added over time.

BACKGROUND – SERVICE STANDARD REVIEW

Since 2016, our government has invested over \$10-billion in improving benefits for Veterans and their families and introducing new programs to help return to the life the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces want to live after their military career is over.

Veterans Affairs Canada has seen a 40% increase in disability benefit applications since 2016. This includes an increase of more than 75% in first applications for disability benefits. This is good news as more people are coming forward to get the help they so need and deserve. Whether ten Veterans, or 10,000 come forward, they will receive the benefits they need. To deal with that increase, our government invested \$42.8 million in Budget 2018 to help meet the increasing demand for disability benefits.

Veterans Affairs Canada has a set of service standards to measure and communicate the level of service we provide to our clients and the expected timelines relating to our programs and benefits. Part of our ongoing commitment to Veterans and others we serve is to develop and maintain accurate service standards that are based on client feedback, representative of our actual performance, and comply with Treasury Board's Policy on Service and Digital. One of the requirements of this new policy, which took effect on April 1, 2020, is for departments to ensure that services have comprehensive and transparent client-centric standards, related targets, and performance information for all service delivery channels in use. Work is underway in the Department to implement this and other requirements in 2020-21.

The Department routinely reviews its service standards to ensure they are useful to Veterans and other clients. With this, Veteran feedback, and the evolution of Veterans Affairs Canada programs and benefits in mind, we expect a number of service standards will be revised and new ones will be added over time.

Wait Time Tool:

In December 2018, Veterans Affairs Canada introduced an online [Wait Time Tool](https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/resources/wait-time-tool) available on Veterans Affairs Canada's website which can be found here <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/resources/wait-time-tool>. The Wait time tool provides the current average wait time for receiving a

decision on an application. VAC is working on adding wait times for more of its programs and services in the near future. This tool has been developed based on feedback from Veterans and others we serve, and continues to be improved.

Status tracking in My VAC Account:

With the implementation of Pension for Life in April 2019, Veterans Affairs Canada enhanced the status tracking tool in My VAC Account to provide additional information and transparency for Veterans on their application status. This tool will continue to be improved based on Veterans' feedback.

2018-19 Service Standard Results

The 2018-19 Service Standard results are now available on the VAC website here: <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/about-vac/what-we-do/service-standards>

Of the 24 service standards, 15 (62.5%) achieved or exceeded the desired target for 2018-19. While this is an improvement over the previous year, we know we must do better and are taking steps to improve our results for Veterans and their families.

There are a number of factors that affect our ability to meet our service standards, including: a significant increase in the number of applications received; the complexity of those applications; and the timeliness of receiving supporting information (health records, doctor's notes, etc.) for applications. We are committed to addressing these issues.

Veterans Affairs Canada continues to streamline the disability benefits process, to simplify the decision-making process for some medical conditions, and to work with its partners to speed up access to service health records.