

## DES Overview

- The purpose of the Army Disability Evaluation System (DES) is to determine if a Soldier who has been issued a permanent profile level 3 or 4 (P3/4) can return to duty and if unable, provide compensation for any unfitting compensable conditions.
- DES consists of three phases: 1) Medical Evaluation Board (MEB), completed by a Military Treatment Facility; 2) Physical Evaluation Board (PEB), completed at one of three Regional sites; and 3) Transition (return to duty or transition to Veteran status).
- Prior to 2008, all DES cases were completed entirely by the Army. Army doctors conducted the MEB, which determines if a Soldier meets retention standards IAW AR 40-501, Chapter 3. Cases failing retention standards were sent to the PEB to determine fitness. For those conditions found unfit, the PEB applied a disability rating based upon their interpretation of the Veterans Affairs Schedule for Rating Disabilities (VASRD). The PEB would rate only unfitting and compensable medical conditions. The combined rating is used to determine if the Soldier was to be medically retired or separated with severance pay. Once separated the Soldier filed a separate disability claim with the VA to receive VA Benefits. This claim often took two or more years to process.
- After 2008, DoD implemented an integrated process in which the DoD and VA disability processing were merged into one process, enabling the Soldier to begin receiving VA benefits upon separation. In this integrated process, the VA completes the medical evaluation and applies VASRD ratings to claimed and unfitting conditions.

## Comparison Chart

The Army is now authorizing Soldiers to request an exception to policy to undergo DES processing through the Legacy DES process if processing through the IDES process would be detrimental to them. The Army may also direct LDES processing for certain Soldiers.

	LDES	IDES
PEB Liaison Officer Assigned	X	X
MSC Assigned		X
VA Claim Initiated		X
MEB Impartial Medical Review & Appeal	X	X
IPEB Appeal (Formal/Informal)	X	X
VA Ratings		X
VA Reconsideration		X
VA Ratings provided prior to separation		X
VA Benefits received upon separation		X
VA Claim initiated through BDD, Quick start, or after separation	X	



### THE ARMY

### DISABILITY EVALUATION SYSTEM

### A Comparison of the Integrated and Legacy Disability Processes



Office of Soldiers' Counsel

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## Integrated DES Process

- IDES is the default processing for Soldiers referred into the DES process. Those Soldiers who do not request processing through LDES within 5 calendar days of initial counseling by their PEBLO will be enrolled in IDES.
- IDES is an integrated process combining the Army and VA disability processes. The Soldier will initiate the VA claim with a Medical Services Coordinator (MSC) and will have the medical evaluation (Compensation & Pension (C&P)) completed by the VA. This evaluation will include referred conditions (the reason for referral into DES) and conditions claimed by the Soldier.
- The Army MEB Provider completes the MEB based on the conditions identified in the C&P and VA claim form (VA Form 21-0819), explaining why a condition does or does not meet retention standards.
- If the Soldier has a condition that does not meet retention standards, the case is forwarded to the PEB to determine fitness. If a condition is determined to be unfitting, the case is forwarded to the VA to determine and issue disability ratings for all service-connected conditions.
- The VA issues ratings to all service-connected conditions evaluated on the C&P exam and forwards their findings to the PEB. The PEB will accept the VA ratings for all unfitting compensable medical conditions. The combined military ratings for all unfitting conditions will determine if military severance pay or retirement is appropriate. The military rating only considers those conditions that make the Soldier unfit for duty. The VA rating considers all listed conditions.
- Soldier receives VA Benefits letter no later than 30 days after separation.

## Legacy DES Process

- Local Military Treatment Facility (MTF) Commanders may approve processing through LDES as an exception to policy (ETP). Soldiers (or their Commanders or healthcare providers) must request LDES processing to be enrolled in LDES.
- The Soldier (or the Commanders or healthcare provider) requesting LDES must clearly identify how IDES processing would be detrimental to the Soldier or to the unit.
- A Soldier may appeal to the MTF Commander any request for LDES made by a unit Commander or healthcare provider.
- Soldiers considering LDES are highly encouraged to consult with their local Office of Soldiers' MEB Counsel (OSMEBC). Your Physical Evaluation Board Liaison Officer (PEBLO) can provide you the contact information.
- Army personnel conduct all phases of the LDES, including the MEB and PEB.
- The MEB identifies which medical conditions fail medical retention standards. The PEB determines if the failing conditions make the Soldier unfit. If so, the PEB issues the disability rating for unfitting conditions. The combined PEB rating will determine if a Soldier will receive severance pay or medical retirement.
- Receipt of VA benefits are not automatic. Under LDES, Soldiers are encouraged to begin their VA disability claim through the Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) or Quick Start programs while still in the military, but are not required to do so.
- Soldier does not begin receiving VA benefits until the claim is initiated through BDD or Quick Start is processed after separation.

## Facts to Consider

- Under LDES, there is no VA involvement.
- If approved to process through LDES, Soldiers will have to undergo two separate examinations: 1) MEB evaluation conducted by an Army MEB provider; and 2) VA exam conducted by VA C&P examiners.
- Under LDES, the Army will provide disability ratings for compensable conditions without coordination from the VA. The PEB will apply their interpretation of the VASRD when issuing disability ratings for unfitting and compensable medical conditions.
- Under LDES, there may be discrepancies between the PEB's rating for the same condition than what is later received from the VA.
- Soldiers processing through LDES have the same appeal rights as those Soldiers processing through IDES with one exception. While Soldiers can formally or informally appeal the PEB findings, under LDES Soldiers are not afforded a VA Reconsideration of the PEB applied ratings since the VA did not provide the ratings.
- Unlike IDES, Soldiers in LDES must separately apply for VA disability compensation.
- LDES Soldiers who do not initiate a separate VA claim while still in the Army will not receive any VA disability benefits after separation unless they separately file a VA claim after separation.
- RC Soldiers with existing VA ratings should consult with a SMEBC prior to making an LDES election.