

Veteran Claims Made Easy™

A Marine's Guide to Filing Correctly & Winning the Benefits You Earned

RESOURCE 16 – INTENT TO FILE (ITF) CHECKLIST

Intent to File (ITF) Checklist

Use this checklist to protect your effective date before you finish building your claim.

An **Intent to File** tells the VA:

“I plan to file a claim, but I need time to gather evidence.”

When done correctly, it can lock in your effective date **up to one year earlier**.

SECTION 1 — WHAT AN INTENT TO FILE DOES

Check each box once understood:

- ☐ Locks in a potential effective date
 - ☐ Gives you up to **1 year** to submit your full claim
 - ☐ Applies to new claims and increases
 - ☐ Can be submitted without evidence
 - ☐ Does *not* start the VA decision process
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SECTION 2 — CONFIRM YOU SHOULD FILE AN ITF

You should submit an ITF if:

- ☐ You plan to file a VA claim but are not ready yet
- ☐ You are waiting on medical records
- ☐ You are gathering buddy statements
- ☐ You are scheduling appointments or exams
- ☐ You want to protect retroactive pay

If **any** of the above apply, filing an ITF is usually a smart move.

SECTION 3 — HOW TO FILE AN INTENT TO FILE

Check the method you plan to use:

☐ VA.gov (online account)

☐ VA Form 21-0966 (paper or upload)

☐ Calling the VA (800-827-1000)

Date ITF submitted: _____

SECTION 4 — IMPORTANT ITF RULES

Check each to acknowledge understanding:

☐ You can have **only one active ITF** at a time

☐ ITF expires **one year** from submission date

☐ Full claim must be submitted before expiration

☐ Submitting a claim uses up the ITF

☐ If ITF expires, effective date is lost

SECTION 5 — TRACK YOUR DEADLINE

ITF submission date: _____

ITF expiration date (1 year later): _____

Reminder set?

☐ Yes

☐ No

SECTION 6 — CONDITIONS YOU PLAN TO FILE

List all conditions you expect to include in your claim.

SECTION 7 — NEXT STEPS AFTER ITF

Once ITF is filed:

- ☐ Gather medical evidence
- ☐ Complete symptom logs
- ☐ Draft personal statements
- ☐ Request private medical records
- ☐ Prepare for C&P exams
- ☐ Choose claim type (FDC vs Standard)



IMPORTANT NOTES

- Filing an ITF early protects your timeline
- You do **not** need to know all conditions yet
- You do **not** need evidence to file an ITF
- One simple step can protect thousands in retroactive pay

If this looks good, we'll continue with **Resource 17: Before-You-Submit Claim Checklist** — the final gut-check before clicking "Submit" on VA.gov.

Just say:

"Approved. Move to Resource 17."