defect and adequate to assess the level of disability due to covered birth defects.

(g) Redeterminations. VA will reassess a determination under this section whenever it receives evidence indicating that a change is warranted.

(h) Referrals. If a regional office is unclear in any case as to whether a condition is a covered birth defect, it may refer the issue to the Director of the Compensation Service for determination.

(i) Effective dates. Except as provided in §3.114(a) or paragraph (i)(1) or (2) of this section, VA will award the monetary allowance under subchapter II of 38 U.S.C. chapter 18, for an individual with disability resulting from one or more covered birth defects, based on an original claim, a claim reopened after final disallowance, or a claim for increase, as of the date VA received the claim (or the date of birth if the claim is received within one year of that date), the date entitlement arose, or December 1, 2001, whichever is latest. Subject to the condition that no benefits may be paid for any period prior to December 1, 2001:

(1) VA will increase benefits as of the earliest date the evidence establishes that the level of severity increased, but only if the beneficiary applies for an increase within one year of that date.

(2) If a claimant reopens a previously disallowed claim based on corrected military records, VA will award the benefit from the latest of the following dates: the date the veteran or beneficiary applied for a correction of the military records; the date the disallowed claim was filed; or, the date one year before the date of receipt of the reopened claim.

(j) Reductions and discontinuances. VA will generally reduce or discontinue awards under subchapter II of 38 U.S.C. chapter 18 according to the facts found except as provided in §§3.105 and 3.114(b).

(1) If benefits were paid erroneously because of beneficiary error, VA will reduce or discontinue benefits as of the effective date of the erroneous award.

(2) If benefits were paid erroneously because of administrative error, VA will reduce or discontinue benefits as of the date of last payment.

Authority: 38 U.S.C. 501, 1811, 1812, 1813, 1814, 1815, 1816, 1831, 1832, 1833, 1834, 5101, 5110, 5111, 5112.

§3.816 Awards under the Nehmer Court Orders for disability or death caused by a condition presumptively associated with herbicide exposure.

(a) Purpose. This section states effective-date rules required by orders of a United States district court in the class-action case of Nehmer v. United States Department of Veterans Affairs, No. CV–86–6160 TEH (N.D. Cal.).

(b) Definitions. For purposes of this section—

(1) Nehmer class member means:

(i) A Vietnam veteran who has a covered herbicide disease; or

(ii) A surviving spouse, child, or parent of a deceased Vietnam veteran who died from a covered herbicide disease.

(2) Covered herbicide disease means a disease for which the Secretary of Veterans Affairs has established a presumption of service connection pursuant to the Agent Orange Act of 1991, Public Law 102–4, other than chloracne, as provided in §3.309(e).

(c) Effective date of disability compensation. If a Nehmer class member is entitled to disability compensation for a covered herbicide disease, the effective date of the award will be as follows:

(1) If VA denied compensation for the same covered herbicide disease in a decision issued between September 25, 1985 and May 3, 1989, the effective date of the award will be the later of the date VA received the claim on which the prior denial was based or the date the disability arose, except as otherwise provided in paragraph (c)(3) of this section. A prior decision will be construed as having denied compensation for the same disease if the prior decision denied compensation for a disease that reasonably may be construed as the same covered herbicide disease for which compensation has been awarded. Minor differences in the terminology
used in the prior decision will not preclude a finding, based on the record at the time of the prior decision, that the prior decision denied compensation for the same covered herbicide disease.

(2) If the class member’s claim for disability compensation for the covered herbicide disease was either pending before VA on May 3, 1989, or was received by VA between that date and the effective date of the statute or regulation establishing a presumption of service connection for the covered disease, the effective date of the award will be the later of the date such claim was received by VA or the date the disability arose, except as otherwise provided in paragraph (c)(3) of this section. A claim will be considered a claim for compensation for a particular covered herbicide disease if:

(i) The claimant’s application and other supporting statements and submissions may reasonably be viewed, under the standards ordinarily governing compensation claims, as indicating an intent to apply for compensation for the covered herbicide disability; or

(ii) VA issued a decision on the claim, between May 3, 1989 and the effective date of the statute or regulation establishing a presumption of service connection for the covered herbicide disease that caused the death, the effective date of the award will be the later of the date such claim was received by VA or the date the death occurred, except as otherwise provided in paragraph (d)(3) of this section. In accordance with §3.152(b)(1), a claim by a surviving spouse or child for death pension will be considered a claim for DIC. In all other cases, a claim will be considered a claim for DIC if the claimant’s application and other supporting statements and submissions may reasonably be viewed, under the standards ordinarily governing DIC claims, as indicating an intent to apply for DIC.

(3) If the class member’s claim referred to in paragraph (c)(1) or (c)(2) of this section was received within one year from the date of the veteran’s death, the effective date of the award shall be the first day of the month in which the death occurred.

(4) If the requirements of paragraph (d)(1) or (d)(2) of this section are not met, the effective date of the award shall be determined in accordance with §§3.114 and 3.400.

(e) Effect of other provisions affecting retroactive entitlement—(1) General. If the requirements specified in paragraphs (c)(1) or (c)(2) or (d)(1) or (d)(2) of this section are satisfied, the effective date shall be assigned as specified in those paragraphs, without regard to the provisions in 38 U.S.C. 5110(g) or §3.114 prohibiting payment for periods prior to the effective date of the statute or regulation establishing a presumption of service connection for a covered herbicide disease. However, the provisions of this section will not apply if payment to a Nehmer class member
based on a claim described in paragraph (c) or (d) of this section is otherwise prohibited by statute or regulation, as, for example, where a class member did not qualify as a surviving spouse at the time of the prior claim or denial.

(2) Claims Based on Service in the Republic of Vietnam Prior to August 5, 1964.

If a claim referred to in paragraph (c) or (d) of this section was denied by VA prior to January 1, 1997, and the veteran’s service in the Republic of Vietnam ended before August 5, 1964, the effective-date rules of this regulation do not apply. The effective date of benefits in such cases shall be determined in accordance with 38 U.S.C. 5110. If a claim referred to in paragraph (c) or (d) of this section was pending before VA on January 1, 1997, or was received by VA after that date, and the veteran’s service in the Republic of Vietnam ended before August 5, 1964, the effective date shall be the later of the date provided by paragraph (c) or (d) of this section or January 1, 1997.

(Authority: Public Law 104–275, sec. 505)

(f) Payment of Benefits to Survivors or Estates of Deceased Beneficiaries—(1) General. If a Nehmer class member entitled to retroactive benefits pursuant to paragraphs (c)(1) through (c)(3) or (d)(1) through (d)(3) of this section dies prior to receiving payment of any such benefits, VA shall pay such unpaid retroactive benefits to the first individual or entity listed below that is in existence at the time of payment:

(i) The class member’s spouse, regardless of current marital status.

NOTE TO PARAGRAPH (f)(1)(i): For purposes of this paragraph, a spouse is the person who was legally married to the class member at the time of the class member’s death.

(ii) The class member’s child(ren), regardless of age or marital status (if more than one child exists, payment will be made in equal shares, accompanied by an explanation of the division).

NOTE TO PARAGRAPH (f)(1)(ii): For purposes of this paragraph, the term “child” includes natural and adopted children, and also includes any stepchildren who were members of the class member’s household at the time of the class member’s death.

(iii) The class member’s parent(s), regardless of dependency (if both parents are alive, payment will be made in equal shares, accompanied by an explanation of the division).

NOTE TO PARAGRAPH (f)(1)(iii): For purposes of this paragraph, the term “parent” includes natural and adoptive parents, but in the event of successive parents, the persons who last stood as parents in relation to the class member will be considered the parents.

(iv) The class member’s estate.

(2) Inapplicability of certain accrued benefit requirements. The provisions of 38 U.S.C. 5121(c) and §3.1000(c) requiring survivors to file claims for accrued benefits do not apply to payments under this section. When a Nehmer class member dies prior to receiving retroactive payments under this section, VA will pay the amount to an identified payee in accordance with paragraph (f)(1) of this section without requiring an application from the payee. Prior to releasing such payment, however, VA may ask the payee to provide further information as specified in paragraph (f)(3) of this section.

(3) Identifying payees. VA shall make reasonable efforts to identify the appropriate payee(s) under paragraph (f)(1) of this section based on information in the veteran’s claims file. If further information is needed to determine whether any appropriate payee exists or whether there are any persons having equal or higher precedence than a known prospective payee, VA will request such information from a survivor or authorized representative if the claims file provides sufficient contact information. Before releasing payment to an identified payee, VA will ask the payee to state whether there are any other survivors of the class member who may have equal or greater entitlement to payment under this section, unless the circumstances clearly indicate that such a request is unnecessary. If, following such efforts, VA releases the full amount of unpaid benefits to a payee, VA may not thereafter pay any portion of such benefits to any other individual, unless VA is able to recover the payment previously released.

(4) Bar to accrued benefit claims. Payment of benefits pursuant to paragraph (f)(1) of this section shall bar a later
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claim by any individual for payment of all or any part of such benefits as accrued benefits under 38 U.S.C. 5121 and §3.1000.

(g) Awards covered by this section. This section applies only to awards of disability compensation or DIC for disability or death caused by a disease listed in paragraph (b)(2) of this section.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 501)

§ 3.851 St. Elizabeths Hospital, Washington, DC.

Benefits due or becoming due any person who is a patient at St. Elizabeths Hospital will be paid to a duly appointed fiduciary of such person. The benefits payable to a veteran who has no spouse, child, or dependent parent will be paid by an institutional award in accordance with §3.852 if there is no such fiduciary. Benefits payable to veterans' dependents who are patients at this hospital will be paid direct or to a fiduciary of such dependent, except that any awards now being paid to the superintendent will be continued while such dependent remains a patient.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 501(a); 5307; 5502)

§ 3.852 Institutional awards.

(a) When an incompetent veteran entitled to pension, compensation or retirement pay is a patient in a hospital or other institution, payments on his (or her) account may be made to the chief officer of a Department of Veterans Affairs or non-Department of Veterans Affairs institution:

(1) When no fiduciary has been appointed or when payments to an unsatisfactory fiduciary have been discontinued;

(2) When the Veterans Service Center Manager certifies that a fiduciary is not furnishing the chief officer funds required for the veteran's comforts and desires not otherwise provided by the institution.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 501(a); 5307; 5502)