

§ 3.353

38 CFR Ch. I (7–1–25 Edition)

her household will not prevent the granting of the additional allowance.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 501, 1114(r)(2), 1114(t))

[41 FR 29680, July 19, 1976, as amended at 44 FR 22720, Apr. 17, 1979; 60 FR 27409, May 24, 1995; 83 FR 20737, May 8, 2018]

§ 3.353 Determinations of incompetency and competency.

(a) *Definition of mental incompetency.* A mentally incompetent person is one who because of injury or disease lacks the mental capacity to contract or to manage his or her own affairs, including disbursement of funds without limitation.

(b) *Authority.* (1) Rating agencies have sole authority to make official determinations of competency and incompetency for purposes of: insurance (38 U.S.C. 1922), and, subject to § 13.110 of this chapter, disbursement of benefits. Such determinations are final and binding on field stations for these purposes.

(2) Where the beneficiary is rated incompetent, the Veterans Service Center Manager will develop information as to the beneficiary's social, economic and industrial adjustment; appoint (or recommend appointment of) a fiduciary as provided in § 13.100 of this chapter; select a method of disbursing payment as provided in § 13.100 of this chapter, or in the case of a married beneficiary, appoint the beneficiary's spouse to receive payments as provided in § 13.100 of this chapter; and authorize disbursement of the benefit.

(3) If in the course of fulfilling the responsibilities assigned in paragraph (b)(2) the Veterans Service Center Manager develops evidence indicating that the beneficiary may be capable of administering the funds payable without limitation, he or she will refer that evidence to the rating agency with a statement as to his or her findings. The rating agency will consider this evidence, together with all other evidence of record, to determine whether its prior determination of incompetency should remain in effect. Reexamination may be requested as provided in § 3.327(a) if necessary to properly evaluate the beneficiary's mental capacity to contract or manage his or her own affairs.

(c) *Medical opinion.* Unless the medical evidence is clear, convincing and leaves no doubt as to the person's incompetency, the rating agency will make no determination of incompetency without a definite expression regarding the question by the responsible medical authorities. Considerations of medical opinions will be in accordance with the principles in paragraph (a) of this section. Determinations relative to incompetency should be based upon all evidence of record and there should be a consistent relationship between the percentage of disability, facts relating to commitment or hospitalization and the holding of incompetency.

(d) *Presumption in favor of competency.* Where reasonable doubt arises regarding a beneficiary's mental capacity to contract or to manage his or her own affairs, including the disbursement of funds without limitation, such doubt will be resolved in favor of competency (see § 3.102 on reasonable doubt).

(e) *Due process.* Whenever it is proposed to make an incompetency determination, the beneficiary will be notified of the proposed action and of the right to a hearing as provided in § 3.103. Such notice is not necessary if the beneficiary has been declared incompetent by a court of competent jurisdiction or if a guardian has been appointed for the beneficiary based upon a court finding of incompetency. If a hearing is requested it must be held prior to a rating decision of incompetency. Failure or refusal of the beneficiary after proper notice to request or cooperate in such a hearing will not preclude a rating decision based on the evidence of record.

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

[36 FR 19020, Sept. 25, 1971, and 40 FR 1241, Jan. 7, 1975, as amended at 42 FR 2069, Jan. 10, 1977; 58 FR 37856, July 14, 1993; 60 FR 55792, Nov. 3, 1995; 66 FR 48560, Sept. 21, 2001; 67 FR 46868, July 17, 2002; 68 FR 34542, June 10, 2003; 83 FR 32738, July 13, 2018]

§ 3.354 Determinations of insanity.

(a) *Definition of insanity.* An insane person is one who, while not mentally defective or constitutionally psychopathic, except when a psychosis has been engrafted upon such basic condition, exhibits, due to disease, a more or

less prolonged deviation from his normal method of behavior; or who interferes with the peace of society; or who has so departed (become antisocial) from the accepted standards of the community to which by birth and education he belongs as to lack the adaptability to make further adjustment to the social customs of the community in which he resides.

(b) *Insanity causing discharge.* When a rating agency is concerned with determining whether a veteran was insane at the time he committed an offense leading to his court-martial, discharge or resignation (38 U.S.C. 5303(b)), it will base its decision on all the evidence procurable relating to the period involved, and apply the definition in paragraph (a) of this section.

[26 FR 1589, Feb. 24, 1961]

§ 3.355 Testamentary capacity for insurance purposes.

When cases are referred to a rating agency involving the testamentary capacity of the insured to execute designations or changes of beneficiary, or designations or changes of option, the following considerations will apply:

(a) Testamentary capacity is that degree of mental capacity necessary to enable a person to perform a testamentary act. This, in general, requires that the testator reasonably comprehend the nature and significance of his act, that is, the subject and extent of his disposition, recognition of the object of his bounty, and appreciation of the consequence of his act, uninfluenced by any material delusion as to the property or persons involved.

(b) Due consideration should be given to all facts of record, with emphasis being placed on those facts bearing upon the mental condition of the testator (insured) at the time or nearest the time he executed the designation or change. In this connection, consideration should be given to lay as well as medical evidence.

(c) Lack of testamentary capacity should not be confused with insanity or mental incompetence. An insane person might have a lucid interval during which he would possess testamentary capacity. On the other hand, a sane person might suffer a temporary mental aberration during which he would

not possess testamentary capacity. There is a general but rebuttable presumption that every testator possesses testamentary capacity. Therefore, reasonable doubts should be resolved in favor of testamentary capacity.

[26 FR 1590, Feb. 24, 1961]

§ 3.356 Conditions which determine permanent incapacity for self-support.

(a) *Basic determinations.* A child must be shown to be permanently incapable of self-support by reason of mental or physical defect at the date of attaining the age of 18 years.

(b) *Rating criteria.* Rating determinations will be made solely on the basis of whether the child is permanently incapable of self-support through his own efforts by reason of physical or mental defects. The question of permanent incapacity for self-support is one of fact for determination by the rating agency on competent evidence of record in the individual case. Rating criteria applicable to disabled veterans are not controlling. Principal factors for consideration are:

(1) The fact that a claimant is earning his or her own support is prima facie evidence that he or she is not incapable of self-support. Incapacity for self-support will not be considered to exist when the child by his or her own efforts is provided with sufficient income for his or her reasonable support.

(2) A child shown by proper evidence to have been permanently incapable of self-support prior to the date of attaining the age of 18 years, may be so held at a later date even though there may have been a short intervening period or periods when his or her condition was such that he or she was employed, provided the cause of incapacity is the same as that upon which the original determination was made and there were no intervening diseases or injuries that could be considered as major factors. Employment which was only casual, intermittent, tryout, unsuccessful, or terminated after a short period by reason of disability, should not be considered as rebutting permanent incapability of self-support otherwise established.