

Department of Veterans Affairs

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within any applicable presumptive period under §§ 3.307, 3.309, 3.313, or 3.316; or

(3) Secondary service connection is established for ischemic heart disease or other cardiovascular disease under § 3.310(b).

(c) For claims for secondary service connection received by VA after June 9, 1998, a disability that is proximately due to or the result of an injury or disease previously service-connected on the basis that it is attributable to the veteran's use of tobacco products during service will not be service-connected under § 3.310(a).

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 501(a), 1103, 1103 note)
[66 FR 18198, Apr. 6, 2001]

§ 3.301 Line of duty and misconduct.

(a) *Line of duty.* Direct service connection may be granted only when a disability or cause of death was incurred or aggravated in line of duty, and not the result of the veteran's own willful misconduct or, for claims filed after October 31, 1990, the result of his or her abuse of alcohol or drugs.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 105)

(b) *Willful misconduct.* Disability pension is not payable for any condition due to the veteran's own willful misconduct.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 1521)

(c) *Specific applications; willful misconduct.* For the purpose of determining entitlement to service-connected and nonservice-connected benefits the definitions in §§ 3.1 (m) and (n) of this part apply except as modified within paragraphs (c)(1) through (c)(3) of this section. The provisions of paragraphs (c)(2) and (c)(3) of this section are subject to the provisions of § 3.302 of this part where applicable.

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

(1) *Venereal disease.* The residuals of venereal disease are not to be considered the result of willful misconduct. Consideration of service connection for residuals of venereal disease as having been incurred in service requires that the initial infection must have occurred during active service. Increase

in service of manifestations of venereal disease will usually be held due to natural progress unless the facts of record indicate the increase in manifestations was precipitated by trauma or by the conditions of the veteran's service, in which event service connection may be established by aggravation. Medical principles pertaining to the incubation period and its relation to the course of the disease; *i.e.*, initial or acute manifestation, or period and course of secondary and late residuals manifested, will be considered when time of incurrence of venereal disease prior to or after entry into service is at issue. In the issue of service connection, whether the veteran complied with service regulations and directives for reporting the disease and undergoing treatment is immaterial after November 14, 1972, and the service department characterization of acquisition of the disease as *willful misconduct* or as *not in line of duty* will not govern.

(2) The simple drinking of alcoholic beverage is not of itself willful misconduct. The deliberate drinking of a known poisonous substance or under conditions which would raise a presumption to that effect will be considered willful misconduct. If, in the drinking of a beverage to enjoy its intoxicating effects, intoxication results proximately and immediately in disability or death, the disability or death will be considered the result of the person's willful misconduct. Organic diseases and disabilities which are a secondary result of the chronic use of alcohol as a beverage, whether out of compulsion or otherwise, will not be considered of willful misconduct origin. (See §§ 21.1043, 21.5041, and 21.7051 of this title regarding the disabling effects of chronic alcoholism for the purpose of extending delimiting periods under education or rehabilitation programs.)

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

(3) *Drug usage.* The isolated and infrequent use of drugs by itself will not be considered willful misconduct; however, the progressive and frequent use of drugs to the point of addiction will be considered willful misconduct.

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Where drugs are used to enjoy or experience their effects and the effects result proximately and immediately in disability or death, such disability or death will be considered the result of the person's willful misconduct. Organic diseases and disabilities which are a secondary result of the chronic use of drugs and infections coinciding with the injection of drugs will not be considered of willful misconduct origin. (See paragraph (d) of this section regarding service connection where disability or death is a result of abuse of drugs.) Where drugs are used for therapeutic purposes or where use of drugs or addiction thereto, results from a service-connected disability, it will not be considered of misconduct origin.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 105, 1110, 1121, 1131, 1301, and 1521(a))

(d) *Line of duty; abuse of alcohol or drugs.* An injury or disease incurred during active military, naval, or air service shall not be deemed to have been incurred in line of duty if such injury or disease was a result of the abuse of alcohol or drugs by the person on whose service benefits are claimed. For the purpose of this paragraph, alcohol abuse means the use of alcoholic beverages over time, or such excessive use at any one time, sufficient to cause disability to or death of the user; drug abuse means the use of illegal drugs (including prescription drugs that are illegally or illicitly obtained), the intentional use of prescription or non-prescription drugs for a purpose other than the medically intended use, or the use of substances other than alcohol to enjoy their intoxicating effects.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 105(a))

CROSS-REFERENCES: In line of duty. See § 3.1(m). Willful misconduct. See § 3.1(n). Extended period of eligibility. See §§ 21.1043 and 21.7051. Periods of entitlement. See § 21.5041.

[26 FR 1579, Feb. 24, 1961, as amended at 37 FR 24662, Nov. 18, 1972; 54 FR 31951, Aug. 3, 1989; 55 FR 13530, Apr. 11, 1990; 60 FR 27408-27409, May 24, 1995]

§ 3.302 Service connection for mental unsoundness in suicide.

(a) *General.* (1) In order for suicide to constitute willful misconduct, the act of self-destruction must be intentional.

(2) A person of unsound mind is incapable of forming an intent (*mens rea*, or guilty mind, which is an essential element of crime or willful misconduct).

(3) It is a constant requirement for favorable action that the precipitating mental unsoundness be service connected.

(b) *Evidence of mental condition.* (1) Whether a person, at the time of suicide, was so unsound mentally that he or she did not realize the consequence of such an act, or was unable to resist such impulse is a question to be determined in each individual case, based on all available lay and medical evidence pertaining to his or her mental condition at the time of suicide.

(2) The act of suicide or a bona fide attempt is considered to be evidence of mental unsoundness. Therefore, where no reasonable adequate motive for suicide is shown by the evidence, the act will be considered to have resulted from mental unsoundness.

(3) A reasonable adequate motive for suicide may be established by affirmative evidence showing circumstances which could lead a rational person to self-destruction.

(c) *Evaluation of evidence.* (1) Affirmative evidence is necessary to justify reversal of service department findings of mental unsoundness where Department of Veterans Affairs criteria do not otherwise warrant contrary findings.

(2) In all instances any reasonable doubt should be resolved favorably to support a finding of service connection (see § 3.102).

CROSS REFERENCE: Cause of death. See § 3.312.

[28 FR 183, Jan. 8, 1963, as amended at 54 FR 31951, Aug. 3, 1989; 55 FR 13530, Apr. 11, 1990]

RATINGS AND EVALUATIONS; SERVICE CONNECTION

§ 3.303 Principles relating to service connection.

(a) *General.* Service connection connotes many factors but basically it means that the facts, shown by evidence, establish that a particular injury or disease resulting in disability was incurred coincident with service in the Armed Forces, or if preexisting such service, was aggravated therein.