

A red oval with a black border containing the text "DON'T FEED" in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

THE SHARKS

We define a **"Claim Shark"** as anyone who:

- **Charges hefty fees** to "guide, assist, advise or consult" veterans with filing or appealing their VA benefit claims — this practice is illegal!
- Asserts they are an "expert" or "guardian" but **evades the professional and ethical standards of VA accreditation** — their advice can be misleading or even fraudulent!
- **Hooks you** — once you're in, you can't get out and may be subject to new and hidden fees whenever you get a new rating — no matter who does the work!

Some of their predatory practices include:

- Claiming they are an "insider" or have inside information to fast track or maximize your VA disability rating.
- Touting better outcomes because you are paying for services.
- Advertising faster VA claims decisions.
- Requesting login credentials to access sensitive personal information through government websites like VA.gov.
- Using confusing tactics or ambiguous language to mislead claimants or coerce them into signing a contract.
- Telling veterans to forego VA exams and offering health consultations within their own network of doctors.

Here is how veterans can help protect themselves:

- Always ask **"Are you accredited with VA?"**
- Insist on signing a VA Power of Attorney before agreeing to any other terms and conditions.
- Refuse to sign legal waivers of your right to accredited representation.
- Never agree to contingent payments based on your future benefits.
- Avoid medical exams or opinions from doctors affiliated with consultation companies.
- Always attend exams ordered by VA.
- Never provide access to private and secure systems or personal information.
- Always ask **"If I have to appeal VA's decision, will you still help me?"**

Who is **NOT** a Claim Shark?

- VA accredited veterans service organization representatives, like VFW's Accredited Service Officers.
- Private VA accredited agents.
- VA accredited attorneys, to include pro bono law clinics.
- All those who turn up here when searched:
www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation.



Who are the Claim Sharks?

We used to list the usual Claim Sharks, but it began reading like a phone book. By this point you know the type – all charm up front, hidden fees in the back.

For free, accredited help from VFW's Accredited Service Officers visit

www.DontFeedTheSharks.org