

to other lethal means such as prescription drugs.

Have you observed any of these warning signs from a loved one — or possibly experienced them yourself?

- Seeking access to firearms, pills or other means of self-harm
- Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide
- Threatening to kill or hurt oneself
- Feeling hopeless, helpless, worthless, or without a sense of purpose in life
- Dramatic mood changes

Thursday, September 10 is World Suicide Prevention Day, part of the weeklong observation of National Suicide Prevention Week. Although many people find the topic of suicide disturbing, the goal of these events is to raise awareness of suicide prevention. This is especially important for our service members, Veterans and military families.

According to the Department of Defense Task Force on the Prevention of Suicide by Members of the Armed Forces, more than 1,300 active-duty service members died by suicide from 2006 to 2010, with the highest numbers belonging to the Army and Marine Corps. Studies estimate that 8,000 Veterans die by suicide *each year*, or approximately 22 each day.

Suicidal behavior is more likely to occur with the combination of three factors: believing one does not belong, believing one is a burden, and possessing the ability to enact lethal self-injury,

- **Not belonging** is a sense that one is not an integral part of a family or other valued group.
- **Being a burden** is the view that one's existence makes no meaningful contribution to the world and has become a burden to family, friends, and/or society, and that their loved ones would be better off without them.
- And the third factor is the **ability to enact lethal self-injury** — many Veterans own personal firearms and/or have access

- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly
- Withdrawing or isolating from others
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Suddenly feeling happier and calmer, especially after a period of depression or sadness
- Giving away prized possessions, making arrangements

Help is available!

If you're a Veteran in crisis or concerned about one, connect with caring, qualified Veterans Crisis Line responders for confidential help. Many responders are Veterans themselves. This service is private, free and available 24/7:

- Call **988** and select 1.
- Or text **838255** to start a confidential chat.
- If you have hearing loss, call **TTY: 800.799.4889**.

You can also take these actions:

- Call 911.
- Go to the nearest emergency room.
- Go directly to your nearest VA medical center. It doesn't matter what your discharge status is or if you're enrolled in VA healthcare. You can find your nearest VA medical center at www.va.gov/find-locations/?facilityType=health.



Letter From Jan

September is here! Along with the cooler weather, we have children starting school and many waiting to ride a school bus. Please be mindful of little people running to meet the bus and, especially, **DO NOT PASS** a stopped school bus. **STOP** is not a suggestion — *it's the law*.

The C&P exam is often a major factor in determining whether a

Veteran qualifies for VA disability benefits. This exam helps establish whether a Veteran's injury or illness is linked to active-duty military service — a requirement for VA disability compensation. Establishing that link is crucial, and C&P exams are one of the most common and best-known ways VA confirms this connection.

If a Veteran or a service member is scheduled for a C&P exam, it is important to know what to expect and how to best prepare beforehand. As Michael Snook, Wounded Warrior Project regional benefits director,

says: "The C&P exam can basically be the deciding factor. There are nuances, and every claim is different, but it can make or break a case. It can be the difference between approval or denial. It's really the most important part of the process for a lot of warriors to really substantiate what is wrong and how bad it is."

Finally, savor these last days of summer. Get in a family outing if you can, and be sure to check in with friends and relatives who are shut in. A friendly visit or phone call will mean a lot.

Recreational Spotlight

Head for the Hills Festival

Head for the Hills is an annual motorcycle festival that will take place September 14–16 at the legendary Pennsboro Speedway in Pennsboro, West Virginia. This event includes camping, concerts, contests and a "Double 8" Poker Tour with a pot of up to \$10,000. For more information, visit discoveritchiecounty.com.

The festival supports Mission 22, a national community assisting active service members, Veterans and their family members through treatment programs, social services and memorials. They are dedicated to healing America's Veterans and offer treatment for post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury, and other issues Veterans are facing today.



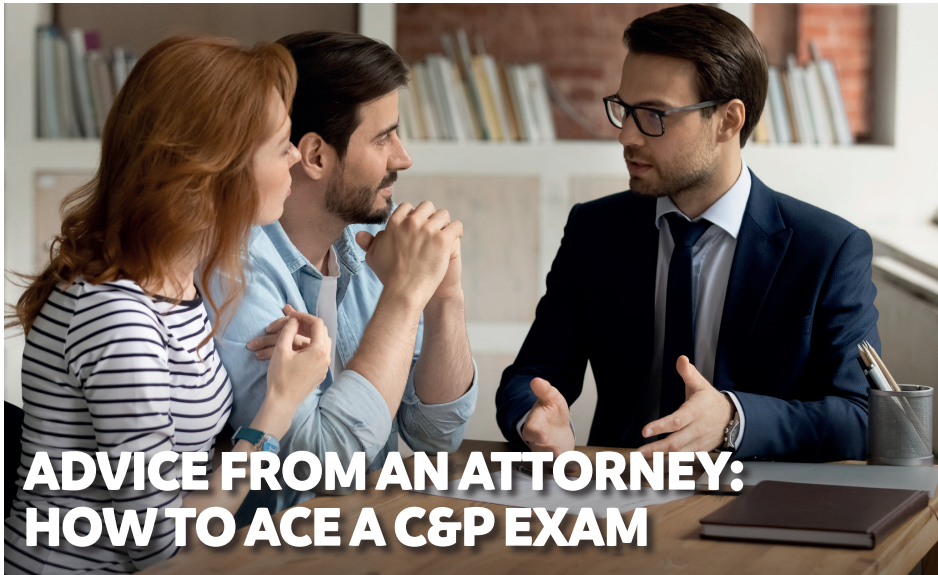
Employee Spotlight

Bradi Thompson

Bradi Thompson, a Medical Records Requester, has been with the firm since February 2023. She started out as a receptionist, and because of her natural go-getter attitude and work ethic, she was given the opportunity to move to the Medical Records team after only one week.

When asked who she most admires, she immediately replied, "My father." Even though her childhood wasn't exactly normal, Bradi said her dad never stopped protecting her and her brother and is always pushing them to better themselves. Outside of work, a large part of Bradi's life centers around her three kids, soon-to-be husband and their cat, Binx (who she claims identifies as a cat but acts more like a dog). Her favorite season is Christmas, and Bradi enjoys spending time with her family and relaxing at home.





ADVICE FROM AN ATTORNEY: HOW TO ACE A C&P EXAM

Here is inside advice from one of our top VA disability attorneys:

First of all, what is a Compensation and Pension (C&P) exam? A C&P exam is a medical examination of a Veteran's disability, performed by a VA healthcare provider or a VA contracted provider. VA uses C&P exams to gather more evidence on a Veteran's claimed condition before issuing a decision and assigning a rating.

Should I attend my C&P exam?

Yes! It is very important to attend your

scheduled C&P exam. If you do not attend, this could result in a denial of your disability claim(s).

What specific advice would you give to anyone attending a C&P exam?

1. Do not minimize symptoms, especially in psych exams. It is extremely important for the examiner to know what you are going through, the degree to which your symptoms impact you, etc. Our clients are particularly tough people who, in many cases, have been dealing with this for a long time, and they know how to mask

their symptoms. This is a really bad time to do that.

2. In that same vein, be honest, even on uncomfortable topics. In the past two weeks, I have had three separate hearings for clients who answered "no" to questions about substance abuse, when in reality they struggled with it. It practically torpedoed them.
3. If you don't fully understand a question, or do not know what the examiner is asking of you, get clarification before you answer. A recent client with 40% hearing loss testified that he did not hear half of what the examiner said, and just guessed. Obviously, not good. Also, these exams are supposed to last a lot longer than they actually do. Don't be rude, but take your time and don't rush through it.
4. If yours is a condition that flares up, such as back pain, a skin disorder, sinusitis, etc., make sure to include that information. Your back may feel pretty good on the day of the exam and horrendous the next day. The bad days are really important.
5. I often tell people to keep a note in their phone leading up to the exam to

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What's Cooking

ONE POT WONDER STUFFED PEPPER SKILLET

This easy (and filling) meal comes from **Lisa Stanley**, SS Case Development Team Leader.



INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 lb. extra-lean ground beef | 2 medium sweet bell peppers, seeded and chopped |
| ½ cup uncooked rice (either white or brown) | 2 tbsp. packed brown sugar |
| 1 (15 oz.) can petite diced tomatoes | 1 tsp. Italian seasoning |
| 1 (8 oz.) can tomato sauce | 1 tsp. salt |
| 1 cup beef broth | ½ tsp. ground black pepper |
| 1 small yellow onion, chopped | 1 clove minced garlic |
| | 1 cup shredded Italian cheese blend |

DIRECTIONS: In a large skillet over medium-high heat, break up the beef with a wooden spoon. Brown until no pink remains, about 8 minutes. Drain the excess fat. Add the rice to the cooked beef. Cook until the rice is golden brown (2-3 minutes), stirring occasionally. Add the remaining ingredients, except for the cheese. Stir well. Bring to a rolling boil. Reduce the heat to medium-low and cover the skillet. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the liquid is absorbed and the rice is tender (20-25 minutes for white rice and 40-45 minutes for brown rice). Top with cheese. Turn off the heat, cover the skillet, and let it rest for 5 minutes to melt the cheese. Serve immediately.

It's Game Time

COMMONYMS

What's a commonym, you ask? A commonym is a group of words that have a common trait in the three words/items listed. For example, the words: A car - A tree - An elephant... they all have trunks. These will make you think!

1. Furniture - Mustaches - Skis
2. Golf Course - A Coffee Shop - A Quart
3. He - She - They
4. Jupiter - Alaska - The Blue Whale
5. Wood Tick - Leech - Mosquito
6. Yawning - Laughter - Influenza
7. Improper - Unit - Mixed
8. Marigold - Mustard - Canary
9. Snake - Cavity - Bottomless
10. Kidney - String - Black

Answers: 1. They are waxed 2. They have cups 3. Pronouns 4. Largest of their kind 5. Blood suckers 6. They are contagious 7. Fractions 8. Shades of yellow 9. They have pits 10. Beans

PERSONAL INJURY | VETERANS DISABILITY | SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY

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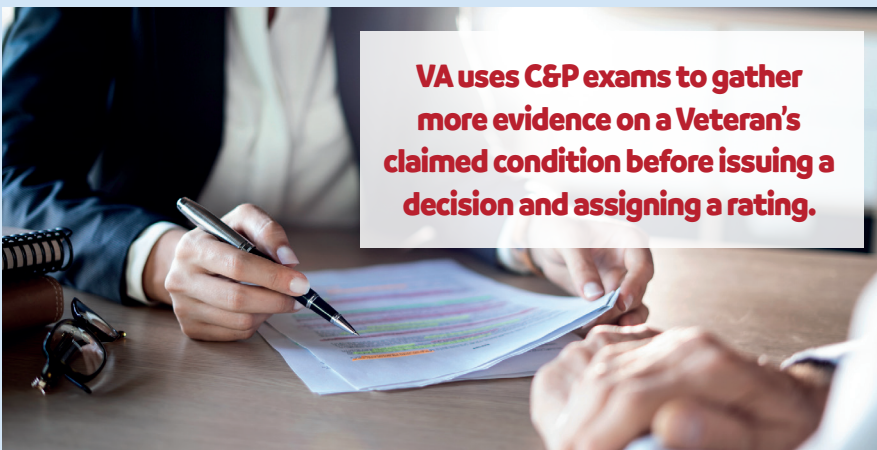
document their symptoms as they go. When you're put on the spot, it can be really hard to remember all the ways PTSD has impacted you, or all the times your knee has given out, but keeping tabs on that in writing and refreshing your memory before the exam can be really helpful.

6. Bring any symptom logs you have (copies, not originals), and give them to the examiner.
7. Don't take it easy the night before. Lots of people think, "Oh, I know I'm going to suffer after they bend and move me, so I'm gonna go slow and take it easy the day before." But then they're being seen on a day when they're fresh,

and the examiner doesn't see how they really feel after a day of regular activities.

8. Offer relevant symptoms even if the examiner doesn't ask the specific question. Most exams are rushed, and examiners don't get to ask all the questions they should.

There's no substitute for expert advice. An experienced attorney can walk you through the process of a C&P exam or an appeal, or help you obtain medical records. Give us a call today at **833.534.3577** or email us at **contact@JanDilsFoundation.org**. We want our Veterans to get the compensation they deserve.



Source: From an actual interview with a top VA disability attorney at Jan Dils, Attorneys at Law.