

From: [Communications, VCF \(CIV\)](#)
To: [Communications, VCF \(CIV\)](#)
Subject: Changes to VCF Outgoing Correspondence and Appeal Deadlines
Date: Wednesday, April 21, 2021 3:38:27 PM

****This email is sent from an unattended mailbox.****

Good afternoon,

This email has several important updates about VCF outgoing correspondence and appeal-related deadlines:

- **Attorney copies of Outgoing Correspondence:** Effective **April 22, 2021**, the VCF will stop generating the copy of outgoing correspondence that is separately addressed to the attorney for all letters generated and uploaded to individual claims. The VCF will continue to generate and upload the letter addressed to the individual claimant, but will not create a second "cc" version addressed directly to the firm. You will still be able to view the letter (addressed to the claimant) in the online system as you do today, and if you are the owner of the claim in the online system, you will continue to receive the email alerting you to the newly uploaded correspondence. These instructions explain how to confirm the [online owner](#) of a particular claim. A reminder on how to identify recently uploaded correspondence for all of your claims can be found at the end of this message.

Note: This change will not affect letters specifically addressed to attorneys, such as the written notification that a claimant has removed or changed their legal representation.

- **Printing and mailing hard copies of previously-generated Letters:** In March 2020, when we stopped printing hard copy letters due to safety precautions necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, we updated the COVID-related information on our website and noted that when normal operations resumed, we would print and mail copies of award letters, eligibility decision letters, and payment confirmation letters that were generated during this time. Over the past year, we have tried to periodically mail batches of hard copy award letters (thanks to a small team of volunteers who have come into the office on weekends), but our backlog continues to grow. We certainly never expected to still be working remotely over one year later! Recognizing that it is an extremely labor-intensive task to try and print these letters, and given that all letters are available in the online claim (and can be printed from the system), **we have decided that we will not print these letters**. Instead, we will send (and upload to the claim) a generic letter to each claimant for whom we generated correspondence of the type mentioned above over the past year, with instructions to either view the letter in their online claim, or contact their attorney to request a copy of the letter if they have not already seen it. *Please see additional information below regarding appeal-related deadlines.*
- **Printing and mailing hard copies of future correspondence:** Given the uncertain timeframe for a return to the office and normal operations, we are working with the Department of Justice to identify options for printing hard copy letters in the future, as they are generated. We will update you once we have more details regarding the timeframe for resuming the printing and mailing of letters to claimants.

- **Appeal-related Deadlines:** When we stopped mailing letters in March 2020, we also updated the policy regarding deadlines to appeal. We stated at the time that claimants have the option to appeal the decision on their claim during the 30-day window outlined in the electronic version of the eligibility or award letter – **or** – if they did not appeal during this timeframe, they would have a new 30-day period to appeal when the hard copy letter is eventually mailed. Given the COVID-related delays we are experiencing in scheduling hearings, and the decision to no longer print and mail these previously-generated letters, **the deadline in the uploaded letter will be the only deadline to appeal effective with all letters dated April 22, 2021, or later.** This will reduce delays in overall claim processing and payments as claims with valid appeals move into the appeals process sooner. Appeal hearings will continue to be scheduled based on the order in which the appeal forms are received.

For claimants who did not appeal on an uploaded version of a letter dated prior to April 22, 2021, the letter they receive explaining the change in our printing policy (referenced above) will instruct them to contact their attorney with any questions about a potential appeal. If you believe your client has a valid basis to request an appeal at this stage, please contact our law firm liaisons to discuss next steps. We expect there will be very few claims for which it is appropriate to request the reinstatement of the right to appeal, as we know you have been consulting with your clients throughout the past year as correspondence has been uploaded.

We would again like to urge you to consider giving your clients **online access** to their claims. As mentioned in the email sent to firms when our office first closed due to COVID-19, providing your clients with online access enables them to view claim status, which will reduce the number of incoming calls to our Helpline and potentially to your firm. The other significant benefit to claimants having online access to their claims is that they will be able to view any uploaded correspondence.

You can easily find recently uploaded correspondence in a claim by following these steps:

1. Log into the online claims system and view your existing registrations and claims.
2. The “Most Recent Correspondence” field shows the date the most recent correspondence was uploaded by the VCF to the claim.
3. This date will change each time a new letter is uploaded.
4. You can sort by date to see all letters uploaded yesterday across all your claims, the day before, etc.
5. You can also export the view into Excel for easier sorting and filtering.

Thank you.

Please do not reply to this email. This email was sent from a mailbox that is not monitored. For assistance, please call our toll-free Helpline at 1-855-885-1555.