



1. **Will I need any documentation just to register for the VCF?** No documents are needed to register with the VCF. Registration is quick and easy, and can be done either online or over the phone by calling the VCF Helpline at 1-855-885-1555. Registration preserves your right to file a claim, but does not obligate you to do so, and it does not waive any rights to file a lawsuit in the future. You should register now even if you are not sick with a 9/11-related illness.

[Easy Step-By-Step Guide \(with pictures!\) to walk you through the registration process](#)

2. **What do I need to provide to the VCF if I now go by a married name that is different than my name at the time of 9/11 – for example, the name on my high school or college transcript that is being submitted in support of my claim? What if my name changed since the time I registered or filed my claim?** See instructions below.
- If your name has changed since you registered or filed your claim with the VCF, you should complete a [Claim Information Resolution Form](#) noting the change and submit one of the documents listed below to show proof of the name change. You can upload these documents to your claim.
 - If your name as shown in your claim form and online claim is correct, but it is different from the name on the documents you are submitting to support your claim, you should upload a letter explaining the name change and provide one of the documents listed below to show proof of the change.

The document(s) you submit to show your name change should show: (1) the name associated with your VCF claim and/or the name on the documents you are submitting to support your claim; and (2) your new name. You should provide one of the following documents based on your circumstances: court order, marriage certificate, divorce decree/order, or other legal documents that support the name change. The VCF does not require originals – you may upload the document(s) to your online claim.

3. **If parents want to file a claim for their child, what will they need to submit to prove they are the parents?** The answer depends on whether the child is a minor (under 18 years of age) at the time the claim is filed:
- If the child is under the age of 18 at the time the claim is filed, the parents serve as the “claimants” on the claim and the minor child is the victim. To protect the rights of the child, the VCF needs proof that the parent or guardian is in fact the victim’s parent or legal guardian. The VCF requires an original or certified copy of the minor child’s birth certificate. In addition, there are specific requirements when parents share legal custody of the child, or when one parent has custody, or when a guardian is involved. The details can be found [here](#).
- Once the minor child turns 18, unless he or she is deemed incapacitated, he or she must file their own claim, or assume ownership of the previously-filed claim.*** If a claim has already been filed on their behalf, the VCF will send a letter to the now-adult child explaining the steps they will need to take in order for the VCF to continue processing the claim.
- If the child is over the age of 18 and wants his or her parent to help file the claim, you do **not** need to submit a birth certificate or other documents listed above. Because the child is an adult, the claim form must be completed by the adult child as a “self” claim in the victim’s name, with all applicable exhibits and supporting documents signed by the victim. The adult child can then authorize the VCF to share information about the claim with a parent by



adding the parent as an “Alternative Contact” on the claim form, which allows the VCF to communicate with the parent about the claim. The adult child may also grant the parent online access to the claim in the VCF claims system. **NOTE:** The parent should **not** be listed on the claim form as an “Authorized Representative” as this designation is only applicable to parents or guardians of minor children, Personal Representatives of deceased individuals, and guardians of incapacitated adults.

If a claim has already been filed by your parent and you are older than 18, you should contact the VCF to discuss the proper next steps. The VCF can help you add your parent as an Alternative Contact and can ensure the appropriate people have online access to the claim.

4. **Do people have to be US citizens to apply and if they aren’t, what forms of identification are accepted?** No, you do not need to be a U.S. citizen to apply for compensation. Non-U.S citizens can provide their national identification number or passport number in the applicable fields on the claim form.
5. **Is there a list of documents that are unequivocally accepted as proof of presence and if so, which of them apply to former students and young people from the area?** The VCF requires documents that support the answers in your claim form to the questions about where you were between September 11, 2001 and May 30, 2002, and why you were there. Your specific circumstances determine the number and type of documents you need to provide. The VCF recognizes that some documents are hard to find so many years later, and has tried to find ways to lessen the burden in gathering these documents. When determining which documents to submit, consider the end result the VCF is trying to achieve - - independent, third-party documentation that verifies you were in the NYC Exposure Zone during the required timeframe. Section 1.6.a. of the VCF [“Policies and Procedures”](#) document has detailed information about how to prove presence at the site.

NOTE: the VCF [“NYC Exposure Zone”](#) is defined as the area in Manhattan south of the line that runs along Canal Street from the Hudson River to the intersection of Canal Street and East Broadway, north on East Broadway to Clinton Street, and east on Clinton Street to the East River; and any area related to or along the routes of debris removal, such as barges and Fresh Kills landfill. Also note the VCF “NYC Exposure Zone” is different from the WTC Health Program “NYC Disaster Area” that is used to assess eligibility for that program.

The following documents are accepted as proof of presence:

- **School records:** If you were present in the NYC Exposure Zone as a student, you can submit school or day care records that confirm enrollment or attendance during the period September 11, 2001 through May 30, 2002, including official school transcripts or report card, or day care records with an accompanying cover letter from an employee of the school or day care facility certifying the accuracy of the information contained in the transcript, report card, or other record. **NOTE:** If you submit school or day care records with a certifying letter, you do not need to submit any additional proof of presence unless requested by the VCF.
- **Residency:** If you lived in the NYC Exposure Zone on 9/11 or in the aftermath, you should submit documents such as rent or mortgage receipts, utility bills, tax documents, FEMA documents, or other similar documents that clearly show the address and the name(s) of the individuals to whom the documents were addressed. If the document is in someone else’s name, such as your parents, you will also need to submit a letter explaining your relationship to the individual(s). **NOTE:** The VCF requires proof not only that you had a residence in the area,



but also that you were physically present at that address during the relevant timeframe. This means that in addition to the lease, utility bill, or other document, you will also need to submit an affidavit from someone who can attest to you living there at that time. See below for additional affidavit-related information.

- **Affidavits:** You can submit two affidavits as your two forms of presence. The affidavits must meet very specific requirements. See below for additional affidavit-related information.

6. What's the appeal process if your proof of presence isn't accepted? If your claim is denied because of lack of proof of presence (or for any other reason), your denial letter will include an appeal form. ***You should appeal the decision and be sure to do so within 30 days of the date of the denial letter.*** A denial simply means the VCF cannot confirm your eligibility based on the documents you submitted, and the appeal hearing is an opportunity for you to provide testimony as additional proof. Simply put, it's a chance to tell your story to the VCF in person.

If you appeal, the VCF will contact you to schedule your hearing and will explain the process and what you should do to prepare for the hearing. Hearings are conducted by trained Hearing Officers and are held in the VCF NYC office (located at 290 Broadway), although arrangements can be made to conduct the hearing by phone if needed. The hearings are non-adversarial and are really more like a conversation. The objective of the hearing is to give you a chance to present additional information through testimony that you believe is necessary to support your claim.

Additional information about Affidavits

An affidavit is simply a statement of facts that is written under penalty of perjury, meaning the individual writing the statement is attesting to its validity and the truthfulness of the statements it contains. If you are submitting affidavits as proof of presence, you will need to submit **two (2)** affidavits. Section 1.6.a. of the VCF "Policies and Procedures" document contains very specific details about affidavits. **You should read this information carefully if you plan to submit an affidavit as part of your proof of presence at the site.**

The person who signs an affidavit is known as an "affiant." Affiants should be **eye-witnesses** at the time who have **personal knowledge** of your presence in the NYC Exposure Zone. Affiants must be able to show that they **directly observed** you at the location and "personally witnessed" you in the zone.

Affidavits should contain as much detail as possible about:

- **How** the affiant knows that you were physically present in the area between September 11, 2001, and May 30, 2002.
- The **specific dates and times when** the affiant knew you were there.
- **What** you and the affiant were doing in the NYC Exposure Zone.
- The **specific location(s) where you and the affiant were at the time**, including the specific address, intersection, building, or other geographic details. As a general rule, more is needed than just "Ground Zero."
- **Why** the affiant was in the area, how long and often you and the affiant were there together, and how the affiant **knows and remembers** that you were present on the particular dates and at the particular locations referenced in the affidavit.

The affidavits must include contact information for the affiants as the VCF may need to contact them to verify the statements.



Who can fill out affidavits? Can family members? What about people who were children at the time? At least one of your two affidavits must be from someone who is not related to you. The second affidavit can be from a family member. If the person writing the affidavit was a child at the time, the individual should have been old enough at the time of 9/11 and the immediate aftermath to know what he or she saw, and to remember the specifics of how he or she knew you were there. There is no age requirement, per se, but the affidavit needs to be credible with detailed facts as remembered by the eye-witness.

How much time do the witnesses need to have witnessed people downtown in order for them to qualify? Is there a certain threshold of days/hours/months, etc.? There is no threshold or minimum amount of time the affiant must have personally witnessed that you were in the NYC Exposure Zone between September 11, 2001, and May 30, 2002. The VCF is looking for proof you were there at any point during the relevant dates. When preparing the affidavit, the reason for asking about dates and times the affiant saw you there is to further demonstrate their knowledge of your whereabouts and not because the VCF is evaluating the length of time for purposes of determining eligibility. **NOTE:** this is different than the WTC Health Program's requirements to demonstrate exposure as they do require minimum timeframes.

Affidavits to support residency in the NYC Exposure Zone at the time: If your reason for being in the area at the time is because you lived in the NYC Exposure Zone, **the affiant** should provide the information explained above and **also** provide:

- Your **exact address** during the time you were living in the area.
- The specific **time period** that you lived at that address (if known by the affiant).
- A statement describing whether the affiant knows if you actually resided at that address for some period between September 11, 2001, and May 30, 2002, and whether the affiant is aware of any time during that period that you were out of town or not living at that address.

Do the affidavits need to be notarized and if not what language needs to be included? No. But if the affidavit is not notarized, the affiant **MUST** include the following language in the affidavit:

“I declare (or certify, verify, or state) under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on [date affidavit is signed]. [Affiant’s Signature]”

Contact the VCF

The VCF website is www.vcf.gov.

The best way to contact the VCF is through their Helpline at 1-855-885-1555. The hours of operation are Monday - Friday, 8:30am - 5:00pm, except Federal holidays.