

Frequently Asked Questions (For website)

1. What is the NDRB and what does it do?

The NDRB, or Naval Discharge Review Board (NDRB), is the designated authority to review and determine whether a service member's discharge was granted in a proper manner and was fair and equitable considering the regulations in effect at the time of the discharge.

Pursuant to statutory limitations, the NDRB can only consider discharges issued within 15 years from the date of application. Discharges older than 15 years must apply to the Board for Correction of Naval records, or BCNR. Their website can be found online at the following location:

<https://www.secnav.navy.mil/mra/bcnr/Pages/default.aspx>

2. Who makes up the NDRB?

The NDRB staff is comprised of a mix of civilian administrative support personnel and military members. The panels completing document record reviews and personal hearings are military officers, active and reserve, from the United States Navy and United States Marine Corps.

The NDRB office overall is overseen by a civilian President. The senior command to which the NDRB reports is the Council of Review Boards. The Director of the Council of Review Boards is also the designated Secretarial Review Authority authorized to review NDRB decisions for final approval or disapproval. Appeals of NDRB decisions are made to the BCNR, or Board for Correction of Naval Records.

3. What is the NDRB empowered to do regarding my discharge?

Within 15 years of discharge a former service member (Applicant) may request a change in the Character of Service (Block 24 on DD Form 214) or the Narrative Reason for Separation (Block 28 on DD Form 214) (or both) using DD Form 293 (Application for the Review of Discharge from the Armed Forces of the United States).

Additionally, the NDRB is authorized to change a NDRB Applicant's Reenlistment Code if related to an accompanying change in discharge characterization or narrative, but this authority is strictly limited to those cases where an applicant's narrative reason or characterization of discharge is changed and that change warrants revision of the previously issued reenlistment code. Of note, the NDRB has no authority to upgrade a discharge for the sole purpose of enhancing reenlistment opportunities. An unfavorable "RE-CODE" is, in itself, not a bar to reenlistment. A request for a waiver can be submitted during the processing of a formal application for reenlistment through a recruiter.

The NDRB does not have the authority to:

- a. Change the Narrative Reason for Separation from or to a Physical Disability or Medical Discharge;
- b. Upgrade a discharge for the sole purpose to become eligible for VA benefits (e.g., GI Bill, home loans, medical treatment, or disability payments);
- c. Upgrade a discharge to improve civilian or government employment opportunities;
- d. Automatically upgrade a discharge based solely on the passage of time or good conduct subsequent to leaving Naval Service;
- e. Reinstate an Applicant into the Navy or Marine Corps;
- f. Recall a former member to active duty;
- g. Cancel or void enlistment contracts;
- h. Review a discharge or dismissal resulting from a General Court-Martial;
- i. Alter the judgment of a court-martial; however, the NDRB can upgrade the discharge or dismissal if clemency is warranted; or
- j. Revoke any discharge or dismissal.

4. What rules guide the NDRB's decisions?

The NDRB reviews discharges on the basis of propriety, equity, and clemency. The Standards used by the NDRB are set forth in Secretary of the Navy Manual 5420.1 of 29 September 2020 (Standards for the execution of the Naval Discharge Review Board). The Applicant should review those standards before submitting any issue upon which the Applicant believes a change in discharge should be based.

5. How do I submit an application?

A. Applicants should first check their eligibility to submit an application by reviewing the following criteria here:

<https://www.secnav.navy.mil/mra/CORB/Pages/NDRB/Eligibility.aspx>. Additionally, an Applicant should ensure their discharge was less than 15 years ago before applying to the NDRB.

B. Determine a type of discharge review you prefer. If you never had a discharge review with the NDRB before, you are eligible for 2 reviews. The first one is a record review. Next is a personal appearance hearing review. However, if you choose to have a personal appearance hearing first, you will no longer be eligible for a record review.

C. Select a counsel or representative, if you wish to be represented for your NDRB application and process. More information is available online here:

<https://www.secnav.navy.mil/mra/CORB/Pages/NDRB/fcr.aspx>

Note: You are not required to select a counsel/representative to petition us. You may leave an empty space on section "10 a" on DD Form 293 if you choose to have no counsel/representative.

D. Gather required documents and supporting documents.

- An Important Document for applying to the NDRB is "A COPY OF YOUR DD FORM 214 MEMBER 4 (IF YOU WERE AN ACTIVE DUTY) OR A FINAL DISCHARGE COMMENT (IF YOU WERE A RESERVIST)."
- Supporting Documents are documents that are related to your discharge, your achievements, your service to country or community, your work performance, etc. Examples of supporting documents are a copy of your medical record, a copy of your military record, a copy of your work performance, a copy of your diagnosis, a reference letter, a letter from a rehabilitation counselor, a transcript, etc.
- Additional potential sources of evidence are identified by the NDRB's notice document entitled "Receipt of Application for Discharge Review," which can be downloaded by clicking [< here.>](#)

E. Complete an application (DD Form 293) and submit it our office. Please ensure to **SIGN and DATE** your DD Form 293 before submitting. **A legal representative MAY NOT SIGN the DD FORM 293 for applicant UNLESS the applicant is deceased or incompetence AND A LEGAL PROOF OF DEATH or INCOMPETENCY must be enclosed.**

F. Submit a complete DD Form 293, a copy of your DD 214 member 4, and any supporting documents (if any) to the NDRB at:

**Secretary of the Navy, Council of Review Boards
ATTN: Naval Discharge Review Board
720 Kennon Ave SE Suite 309
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5023
OR Fax your application to 202-685-6577**

G. Within 8 weeks from the date you submitted the application package, you should receive a letter from our office regarding the package. If accepted, you will receive "A Letter Of Acceptance" with a "Docket Number." If denied, your package will be returned with a letter of explanation.

H. Once accepted, your application will be processed and prepared for a discharge review.

6. Where do I submit my application?

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7. What should I include in my application?

- A. You should submit a completed and “signed” DD Form 293.
- B. Also, if possible, you should submit a copy of your DD Form 214.
- C. Although you are not required to submit evidence to the NDRB, it can help explain your case. Evidence can include such things as:
 - A personal statement or statements/affidavits from fellow service members explaining the underlying reason for your discharge;
 - Evidence of the quality of your service, such as awards and decorations, combat service, and promotions/responsibility;
 - Evidence of post service such as letters of recommendation/commendation/promotion from supervisors, performance reports, or a resume;
 - Documentation of a diagnosis, such as documentation or testimony about symptoms or signs of any of these conditions or experiences, even without a diagnosis.
 - In addition to medical records or other similar documentation, you may also submit signed, sworn statements from many different sources such as family, peers, doctors, counselors, or other service members you served with, who can testify or assert that you experienced signs or symptoms of a mental health condition during your period of service.

8. What is the general process after my application has been submitted?

The general process for NDRB hearings is as follows:

Step 1: If you are eligible to petition to the NDRB, you must submit a complete application for a discharge review (DD Form 293) and a copy of your DD 214 member 4 (for former active duty) or a copy of your final discharge documentation (for former reservist).

Step 2: Once received, your application package will be screened by the NDRB staff. If your application does not meet any requirements or is incomplete, your package will be returned to you within 4 weeks along with a letter of explanation.

Step 3: If your application is accepted, you will receive "A Letter of Acceptance" and "A Request For Information Sheet" in the mail within 4 weeks from the date the application is received.

Step 4: You must complete "A Request For Information Sheet" and return it to NDRB within 30 days from the date the letter is sent. If you have any additional documents that you wish to submit to the board, you may enclose it to the letter. Please note that you may

submit supporting documents to the board any time before the final decision is made. Please make sure to write your name and your Docket Number on the cover page.

Step 5: Once the "Request For Information Sheet" is received, the NDRB staff will make a request to obtain a copy of all necessary official records related to your request for a discharge review.

Step 6: NDRB Board Members will conduct a review of your request.

Note: if you have requested a personal appearance hearing review, you will receive a letter of scheduling at least 30 days prior to the hearing date.

Step 7: The NDRB Board Members will make a final decision to grant or deny your request.

Step 8: Your case will be sent to a close-out section and the result will be mailed to the address you provided. The online result will be available at the Board of Review Reading Rooms Website no later than 4 weeks after the case is closed.

Step 9: If your discharge is upgraded/changed, the Navy Personnel Command or the Marine Corps Headquarters (depends on your former branch of service), will mail you either a correction of your DD Form 214 called DD Form 215, or a new DD Form 214, within 6-8 weeks. Additional information will be included in the letter from us.

Step 10: If your record review for a discharge is denied and your discharge is still within 15 years, you can request a Personal Appearance/Telephonic Hearing, if the application is received by the NDRB within 15 years of the date of your discharge. You can provide documentation to support any claim(s) related to your discharge as well as evidence of post-service accomplishments. Representation at a personal appearance hearing by an Attorney (or Advocate) is recommended but not required. There are veterans organizations such as the American Legion and the Disabled American Veterans that are willing to provide guidance to former service members in their efforts to obtain a discharge upgrade.

However, if you have been discharged for more than 15 years, already had a personal appearance hearing, or otherwise exhausted your opportunity to be heard by the NDRB, you must petition the Board for Correction of Naval Records (BCNR), at 701 South Courthouse Road, Suite 1001, Arlington, VA 22204-2490 or <http://www.secnav.navy.mil/mra/bcnr/Pages/default.aspx>, for further review.

9. What is the difference between a Documentary Record Review and a Personal Appearance Hearing?

There are two types of reviews: Documentary Record Review and Personal Appearance Hearing. Each Applicant is entitled to one (1) Documentary Record Review and one (1) Personal Appearance Hearing.

The Documentary Record Review is what it sounds like: the NDRB considers the paper records submitted by the applicant alone, and makes a determination based on the applicant's military record, submitted application, and submitted evidence. The NDRB will apply the respective administrative regulations and/or statutes, as indicated by the file, and consider matters of equity.

A Personal Appearance Hearing permits an individual to speak to the NDRB panel considering their case, either directly or through a representative.

It is recommended that an Applicant apply for a Documentary Record Review first, followed by a personal Appearance Hearing if full relief is not granted. However, should the Applicant apply for and receive a Personal Appearance Hearing first, the Applicant is no longer eligible for a Documentary Record Review.

The NDRB conducts all Documentary Record Reviews and Personal Appearance Hearings at the Washington Navy Yard in Washington, D.C. An Applicant is not present for the Documentary Review but must appear for the Personal Appearance Hearing. Personal Appearance Hearings can be conducted in person, by telephone, or by video teleconference (VTC). The NDRB does not have a traveling panel, and any in person elections must be prepared to travel to Washington, D.C., at their own expense.

10. How do I request a personal appearance hearing?

To request an in person, telephonic, or VTC hearing, you should check the second box in Section 19 on your DD Form 293 Application. Please remember that an applicant is only entitled to one (1) personal appearance hearing. Once a personal appearance hearing is held, an applicant will no longer be entitled to a documentary record review. It is recommended to request a documentary record review first and, if full relief is not granted, request a personal appearance hearing after.

11. What happens if I don't request a personal appearance hearing?

Your application and supporting materials will be considered on the basis of the documents submitted alone. This is called a documentary record review. Each applicant is entitled to one (1) documentary record review and one (1) personal appearance hearing.

12. Are there any restrictions on my ability to submit materials to the NDRB for consideration?

All materials must be received before the date of your document review or personal appearance hearing to be considered. Materials received after the document review or personal appearance hearing is completed will not be considered, and a new review and/or hearing will not be provided.

There are no other limitations on the evidence you may submit to the NDRB. Potential sources of evidence are identified by the NDRB's notice document entitled, "Receipt of Application for Discharge Review," which can be downloaded by clicking [< here.>](#)

13. Can I have a lawyer represent me?

All applicants are entitled to be represented by a lawyer, at their election, before the NDRB. The costs of representation, if any, are paid by the applicant and not subject to reimbursement by the NDRB, even if your application is successful. More information

regarding attorneys is available online here:

<https://www.secnnav.navy.mil/mra/CORB/Pages/NDRB/fcr.aspx>

Many legal aid and veteran service organizations will assist veterans free of charge with their applications and/or legal representation. More information regarding potential resources can be located in the NDRB's "Receipt of Application for Discharge Review" notice, which can be downloaded by clicking **< here.>**

Although you are entitled to representation by counsel, you are not required to use a counsel to petition the NDRB. Applicants who do not wish to use a lawyer or legal representative for their application may leave an empty space on section "10 a" on DD Form 293. Legal counsel are often able to help clients organize their applications and present their cases in a coherent and persuasive manner, which improves the likelihood of your application being granted by the NDRB. Applicants should consider carefully before declining legal representation.

14. Can I call witnesses or produce evidence myself to the NDRB?

Yes. Applicants may call witnesses and produce evidence before the NDRB. Applicants who are represented by legal counsel should discuss with their legal counsel how evidence is to be presented to the NDRB.

15. Must I appear before the NDRB in person, or what are my options?

All NDRB applicants are entitled to one (1) documentary record review and one (1) personal appearance hearing before the NDRB. Applicants seeking a documentary record review only do not need to appear before the NDRB. Applicants seeking a personal hearing must appear before the NDRB, and may do so in person at the NDRB's office in Washington, D.C., (at their expense), by telephone, or by video teleconference.

Individuals selecting a personal appearance hearing should consult with their counsel (if any) and contact their NDRB claims examiner for further details.

16. What are my options if I don't like the NDRB's decision?

Applicants who have completed a documentary record review, but not a personal appearance hearing, (and with a discharge date less than 15 years from the date of mailing a new submission) may request a personal appearance hearing before the NDRB for reconsideration.

Applicants who have had a Documentary Review and/or Personal Appearance Hearing (and/or who were discharged more than 15 years from the date of a new submission/appeal) must appeal/petition the Board for Correction of Naval Records (BCNR) for relief.

Finally, Applicants with a date of discharge on or after December 20, 2019, and who have exhausted all appeals with the NDRB and the BCNR may appeal to the Department of Defense Discharge Review Appeal Board (DARB). Information concerning the DARB can be found at <https://afrba-portal.cce.af.mil/#board-info/darb/navbar>.

17. Who can I contact for more information if I still have questions?

The NDRB can be contacted for general questions by telephone at (202) 685-6600 (Commercial) or 325-6600 (DSN).

Written inquiries may be emailed to NDRB@Navy.mil, faxed to (202) 685-657, or submitted via U.S. mail to:

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