



Strategic Goal Two

Ensure a smooth transition for veterans from active military service to civilian life.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2.1

Reentry into Civilian Life

Ease the reentry of new veterans into civilian life by increasing awareness of, access to, and use of VA health care, benefits, and services.

Making a Difference for the Veteran

New Ft. Bragg Facility Provides Needed Bridge for Easing Transition to Civilian Life



Ron Aument, VA Deputy Under Secretary for Benefits (center); Colonel David G. Fox, Garrison Commander Fort Bragg (left); and Monty Montgomery, Director, Winston-Salem Regional Office (right) at the grand opening of the Benefits Delivery Office.

To provide easier access for soldiers at Ft. Bragg to benefits offered by VA—especially programs for transitioning service-members—VA and Ft. Bragg opened a newly expanded Benefits Delivery Office in August.

"VA is absolutely committed to ensure that military members have a seamless transition from active duty to VA's benefits and health care systems," said Ronald Aument, VA's Deputy Under Secretary for Benefits. "This new office helps us fulfill that commitment."

VA operates 140 offices on military installations as part of its Benefits Delivery at Discharge program. Among the services offered by the VA facility at Ft. Bragg are the following:

- Benefits counselors will coordinate with the Warrior Transition Battalion at Womack Medical Center and the VA Medical Center in Fayetteville to ensure that the most severely injured soldiers continue to receive the highest level of care as they leave active duty.
- Staff at the VA office can explain to separating servicemembers the full range of health care, disability, home loan, vocational, and educational benefits offered by VA.
- For those within 6 months of separation, VA can help file a claim for benefits and provide a medical examination to record any disabilities. For those eligible for rehabilitation assistance, VA counselors can meet with the separating servicemembers to plan a program of education and training that will help them return to productive employment after discharge.

"We are thrilled to have this new location where we can meet with soldiers and airmen before their discharge, and provide them information and assistance on VA benefits," said John Montgomery, Director of VA's Winston-Salem Regional Office. "Prior to this, we had to send soldiers to Fayetteville for medical exams and to Spring Lake for vocational rehabilitation counseling. This new office allows us to provide true one-stop service to these deserving men and women."



Significant Trends, Impacts, and Use of FY 2007 Results

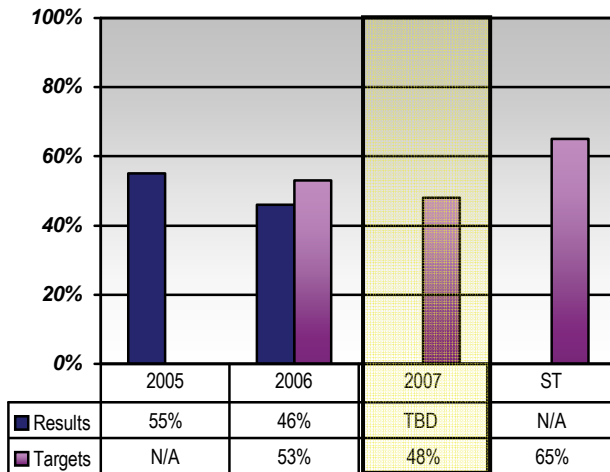
Supporting Measure															
PERCENT OF SEVERELY-INJURED OR ILL OEF/OIF SERVICEMEMBERS/VETERANS WHO ARE CONTACTED BY THEIR ASSIGNED VA CASE MANAGER WITHIN 7 CALENDAR DAYS OF NOTIFICATION OF TRANSFER TO THE VA SYSTEM AS AN INPATIENT OR OUTPATIENT															
Performance Trends		Impact on the Veteran													
<table border="1"> <tr> <td></td> <td>2006</td> <td>2007</td> <td>ST (2)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Results</td> <td>Baseline</td> <td>90%</td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Targets</td> <td>Baseline</td> <td>90%</td> <td>95%</td> </tr> </table>			2006	2007	ST (2)	Results	Baseline	90%	N/A	Targets	Baseline	90%	95%	<p>This measure is designed to monitor how quickly VA case managers contact severely wounded OIF/OEF veterans and their families. Case managers play an important role in helping these individuals make a smooth and efficient transition into VA health facilities. In this context, the case managers help these veterans and their families understand VA's system of health care and financial benefits.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">How VA Uses the Results Data</p> <p>Measure data are posted on the VHA Support Service Center (VSSC) site monthly, where they are viewable by facility, network, and Central Office staff. Measure data are also published quarterly in the Executive Briefing Book maintained on the Office of Quality and Performance Web site. Data are shown nationally, as well as by VISN and facility. Quality Managers, Chief Medical Officers, Facility Directors, Network Directors, and Central Office staff access the data in the Briefing Book on a regular basis.</p> <p>The results data serve as key VA monitoring capabilities with regard to OIF/OEF patients. Data are used to identify process and system problems that can then be resolved in a timely manner. If the performance level of a given facility continually falls below the target of 90 percent, VA would examine the situation to determine possible reasons and solutions. Potential strategies could include increasing the number of case managers, additional staff training, improving documentation to capture accomplishments, and expanding methodologies for making veteran contact.</p>	
	2006	2007	ST (2)												
Results	Baseline	90%	N/A												
Targets	Baseline	90%	95%												
<p>(1) Actual 2007 results data through 08/2007. Final data are expected in 11/2007. (2) ST = Strategic Target</p>															



Supporting Measure

OUT OF ALL ORIGINAL CLAIMS FILED WITHIN THE FIRST YEAR OF RELEASE FROM ACTIVE DUTY, THE PERCENTAGE FILED AT A BDD SITE PRIOR TO A SERVICEMEMBER'S DISCHARGE

Performance Trends



- (1) Actual 2007 results data TBD. Final data are expected in 11/2007.
- (2) 2006 Result has been recalculated.
- (3) ST = Strategic Target

Impact on the Veteran

The BDD program helps servicemembers who have only 60 to 180 days remaining before separation and/or retirement to file for VA service-connected disability compensation. For those granted VA disability benefits, the program provides a seamless transition from the DoD health care system into the VA medical and benefits system. Through July 2007, VA received more than 33,800 original compensation claims through the BDD program.

How VA Uses the Results Data

VA uses the results data to measure the participation rate in the BDD program. Together with DoD, VA seeks to achieve a participation rate of 65 percent by 2011.

Additional Performance Information Related to Strategic Objective 2.1

OIG Major Management Challenges and GAO High-Risk Areas

VA's Office of Inspector General did not identify any major management challenges related to this objective. The Government Accountability Office did not identify any high-risk areas related to this objective.

Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) Evaluation

No PART evaluations have been completed that specifically address this objective.

Program Evaluations

No independent program evaluations have been conducted recently that specifically address this objective.

New Policies, Procedures, or Process Improvements

In September 2007, VA introduced the BDD program to Navy personnel. The program began in San Diego, California.

VA also expanded transition assistance to servicemembers through the Pre-Discharge Claims Process. This process is for servicemembers within 180 days of discharge and includes National Guard, Reservist, and those undergoing medical evaluation and physical evaluation boards.

Because of the BDD program's unique process, it is being used to evaluate the feasibility of using Virtual VA (VVA) to electronically process claims. Service medical records are scanned into the VVA system, and the claim is processed in a completely virtual environment. To date, there have been over 2,300 BDD claims processed through Virtual VA.



Other Important Results

In February 2007, VA announced the expansion of a collaborative outreach program with states and territories to help severely injured servicemembers receive benefits from their states when they transition from military hospitals to VA medical facilities in their communities.

In October 2003, VA began placing social work liaisons and VBA benefits counselors at 10 major Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) to assist injured and ill servicemembers transition from the military to veteran status. Through August 31, 2007, VHA staff has coordinated

8,150 transfers of OIF/OEF servicemembers and veterans from an MTF to a VA medical facility.

Since its inception in November 2005 through July 31, 2007, more than 113,000 Reserve and Guard members have completed the Post Deployment Health Reassessment (PDHRA) on-site screen, resulting in over 26,345 referrals to VA medical centers and 13,213 to Vet Centers.

Data Quality

VA's data quality improvement efforts, including its work on data verification and validation, are described in the Assessment of Data Quality on page 192.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2.2

Decisions on Education Claims

Enhance the ability of veterans and servicemembers to achieve educational and career goals by providing timely and accurate decisions on education claims and continuing payments at appropriate levels.

Making a Difference for the Veteran

VA's GI Bill Opens Doors of Educational Opportunity For Veterans

Since 1944, GI Bill educational benefits have opened the doors of opportunity for nearly 22 million veterans. Matt Stiner, a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom and a senior at Oklahoma State University, is one of the latest additions to that 63-year-old success story.



Matt Stiner is a perfect example of how VA's education programs continue to work for our newest generation of combat veterans. Since the creation of the GI Bill, 21.9 million veterans and active-duty personnel have received more than \$80 billion in benefits for education or training.

A native of Tulsa, Oklahoma, majoring in political science, Stiner was among only 75 college juniors to receive a prestigious \$30,000 Truman Scholarship. The Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation honors students who are entering public service.

"VA is proud to see a veteran using the GI Bill receive such a prestigious honor," said former Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. "Stiner is a perfect example of how VA's education programs continue to work for our newest generation of combat veterans."

"The GI Bill was part of the reason I joined the military," said Stiner. "It has enabled me to attend college and really focus on my studies. I received information about the GI Bill during my first day at boot camp and always knew I would benefit from it."

After graduating, Stiner, who began using the Montgomery GI Bill in July 2004, plans to pursue a master's degree in public administration from the University of Georgia.

In 2000, Stiner enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps and served 4 years as an assistant chief of a 155 mm howitzer section, as a Marine combat instructor of water survival, and as a Green Belt martial arts instructor. Stiner spent 7 months in Iraq.

"This country was founded on the principles that led to the GI Bill and I hope other veterans will get out and use it," said Stiner. "If you are passionate about something, it will certainly help you accomplish your dreams -- not only in a college setting but through vocational training and other opportunities. If I can do it, anybody can."

The GI Bill's educational benefits trace their roots back to June 22, 1944, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into law the GI Bill of Rights, which gave veterans financial assistance with advanced educational or vocational training. The current version of that landmark legislation, the Montgomery GI Bill, was enacted in 1985.

Since the creation of the GI Bill, 21.9 million veterans and active-duty personnel have received more than \$80 billion in benefits for education or training.



Significant Trends, Impacts, and Use of FY 2007 Results

Key Measure						
AVERAGE DAYS TO COMPLETE ORIGINAL EDUCATION CLAIMS						
Performance Trends				Impact on the Veteran		
45						
35						
25						
15						
5						
2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	ST	
■ Results	23	26	33	40	32.4	N/A
■ Targets	29	24	25	27	35	10
<p>ST = Strategic Target</p> <p>The timeliness of completing original education claims improved from 40 days in 2006 to 32.4 days in 2007. Thus, compared with 2006, veterans waited on average 7.6 fewer days to receive their initial award notification and payment. Making timely payments to veterans for educational claims is critical to helping them meet their educational goals.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">How VA Uses the Results Data</p> <p>VA management uses performance results information to pinpoint areas of performance weakness and then takes appropriate corrective actions. Such actions include hiring additional employees to process claims and authorizing additional funding at the processing offices to enable employees to work overtime.</p> <p>The improvement in performance during 2007 was primarily due to the formation of the National Call Center (NCC). The NCC enabled Regional Processing Office (RPO) employees to process more original claims and reduce the backlog of pending claims. Employees at the NCC answered education program inquiries from servicemembers, reservists, veterans, and dependents.</p>						

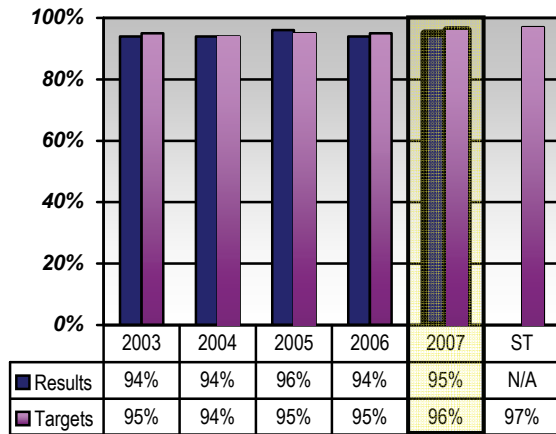
Key Measure						
AVERAGE DAYS TO COMPLETE SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION CLAIMS						
Performance Trends				Impact on the Veteran		
25						
20						
15						
10						
0						
2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	ST	
■ Results	12	13	19	20	13.2	N/A
□ Targets	15	12	13	13	15	7
<p>The timeliness of completing supplemental education claims improved from 20 days in 2006 to 13.2 days in 2007. Thus, compared with 2006, veterans waited on average 6.8 fewer days to receive their award notification and payment. Making timely payments to veterans for educational claims is critical to helping them meet their educational goals.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">How VA Uses the Results Data</p> <p>VA management uses performance results information to pinpoint areas of performance weakness and then takes appropriate corrective actions. As stated above, the formation of the National Call Center in 2007 enabled RPO employees to process more original claims and reduce the backlog of pending claims.</p>						



Supporting Measure

PAYMENT ACCURACY RATE (EDUCATION)

Performance Trends



(1) 2006 result is corrected.
 (2) ST = Strategic Target

Impact on the Veteran

VA missed the 2007 target by 1 percentage point. However, the accuracy rate increased from 94 percent in 2006 to 95 percent in 2007. Making accurate payments to veterans for educational claims is critical to helping them meet their educational goals and for assuring that VA is providing the appropriate level of tuition assistance.

How VA Uses the Results Data

VA management uses performance results information to pinpoint areas of performance weakness and then takes appropriate corrective actions. As stated above, the formation of the National Call Center enabled RPO employees to process more original claims and reduce the backlog of pending claims.

Additional Performance Information Related to Strategic Objective 2.2

OIG Major Management Challenges and GAO High-Risk Areas

VA's Office of Inspector General did not identify any major management challenges related to this objective. The Government Accountability Office did not identify any high-risk areas related to this objective.

Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) Evaluation

In relation to this strategic objective, the Administration conducted a PART evaluation of VA's Education program during CY 2003, which resulted in a rating of "Results Not Demonstrated." Please see OMB PART reviews on page 80 for more information.

Program Evaluations

No independent program evaluations have been conducted recently that specifically address this objective.

New Policies, Procedures, or Process Improvements

VA implemented several major policies and procedures that enhanced the ability of veterans and servicemembers to achieve educational and career goals in 2007, including the following three:

- Instructions to process claims for benefits under the National Call to Service program.
- Procedures to institute payments of Licensing and Certification claims under the MGIB-SR (Chapter 1606) program.
- Instructions regarding the new Dependents Educational Assistance (DEA) (Chapter 35) eligibility category based on hospitalization in Service. Eligibility under DEA has been extended to include dependents of service persons who have a service-connected permanent and total disability and are likely to be discharged or released from service for their service-connected disability.



Other Important Results

In 2007 Education Service implemented 23 recommendations from its 2006 RPO workshop. The recommendations primarily dealt with information technology and systems-related modifications that improved VA's ability to process claims more efficiently.

Data Quality

The first phase of The Education Expert System (TEES) was completed in March 2007 with the launching of the Web Enabled Approval Management System (WEAMS). WEAMS is the approval repository for educational and job training programs; licensing and certification tests; and national exams maintained in the VA corporate environment. WEAMS merged two existing approval systems – the On-Line Approval File, which contained educational and job training programs, and the Licensing and Certification Approval System, which contains the approvals for national exams. The consolidation of these legacy applications and the manual process for national exam approvals into a single repository allows Education Liaison Representatives to process and maintain approval information more efficiently. The public began accessing WEAMS on-line to ascertain which programs are approved for VA training. Education Service will continue to expand Internet-based options for obtaining information about benefits and contacting VA.

Data Verification and Measure Validation

Verification and validation information for the two key measures that support this objective is provided in the Key Measures Data Table on page 206.