

*Affected Public:* Business or other for-profit organizations and not-for-profit institutions.

*Estimated Number of Respondents:* 300,000.

*Estimated Time Per Respondent:* 2 hours.

*Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours:* 600,000.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless the collection of information displays a valid OMB control number. Books or records relating to a collection of information must be retained as long as their contents may become material in the administration of any internal revenue law. Generally, tax returns and tax return information are confidential, as required by 26 U.S.C. 6103.

*Request for Comments:* Comments submitted in response to this notice will be summarized and/or included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will become a matter of public record. Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information shall have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the collection of information; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology; and (e) estimates of capital or start-up costs and costs of operation, maintenance, and purchase of services to provide information.

Approved: January 30, 2004.

**Glenn P. Kirkland,**

*IRS Reports Clearance Officer.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

### Privacy Act of 1974; System of Records

**AGENCY:** Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

**ACTION:** Notice of amendment to system of records.

**SUMMARY:** The Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. 552a(e) (4)) requires that all agencies publish in the **Federal Register** a notice of the existence and character of their systems of records. Notice is

hereby given that VA is amending the system of records currently entitled "Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture (VistA) Records—VA" (79VA19) as set forth in the **Federal Register** 56 FR 6048 and last amended in the **Federal Register** 65 FR 70632-70636. VA is amending the routine uses of records maintained in the system, including categories of users and the purposes of such uses, the policies and practices for storing, retrieving, accessing, retaining and disposing of records in the system, and the system manager(s) and address. VA is republishing the system notice in its entirety.

**DATES:** Comments on the amendment of this system of records must be received no later than March 8, 2004. If no public comment is received during the period allowed for comment or unless otherwise published in the **Federal Register** by VA, the system will become effective March 8, 2004.

**ADDRESSES:** Written comments concerning the proposed amended system of records may be submitted by: mail or hand-delivery to Director, Regulations Management (00REG1), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW., Room 1068, Washington, DC 20420; fax to (202) 273-9026; or e-mail to [VAregulations@mail.va.gov](mailto:VAregulations@mail.va.gov). All comments received will be available for public inspection in the Office of Regulation Policy and Management, Room 1063B, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday (except holidays). Please call (202) 273-9515 for an appointment.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Privacy Act Officer, Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20420, telephone (727) 320-1839.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

*Background:* In the 1980s, VHA developed an electronic health care architecture called the Decentralized Hospital Computer Program (DHCP) that was comprised of software applications that were integrated into a complete hospital information system primarily for hospital-based activities. DHCP was installed at VA medical facilities to provide comprehensive support for clinical and administrative needs and for VA-wide management information. By 1990, VHA upgraded computer capacity at all medical facilities and implemented software on a national scale that supported integrated health care delivery. In 1996, VHA introduced the Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture

(VistA), a client-server architecture that tied together workstations and personal computers and supported the day-to-day operations at all health care facilities.

The purpose of the system of records is to provide a repository for the administrative information that is used to accomplish the purposes described. The records include information provided by applicants for employment, employees, volunteers, trainees, contractors and subcontractors, consultants, maintenance personnel, students, patients, and information obtained in the course of routine work done. Quality assurance information that is protected by 38 U.S.C. 7311 and 38 CFR 17.500-17.511 is not within the scope of the Privacy Act and, therefore, is not included in this system of records or filed in a manner in which the information may be retrieved by reference to an individual identifier.

Data stored in VistA is used to prepare various management, tracking, and follow-up reports that are used to assist in the management and operation of the health care facility, and the planning and delivery of patient medical care. Data may be used to track and evaluate patient care services; the distribution and utilization of resources; and the performance of vendors and employees. The data may also be used for such purposes as scheduling employees' tours of duty and for scheduling patient treatment services including nursing care, clinic appointments, surveys, diagnostic and therapeutic procedures. Data may also be used to track the ordering, delivery, maintenance and repair of equipment and for follow-up to determine if the actions were accomplished and to evaluate the results.

The routine uses of records maintained in the system, including categories of users and the purposes of such uses are amended, as described below, to enable efficient administration and operation of health care facilities and to assist in the planning and delivery of patient medical care:

- Routine use number one (1) is amended in its entirety. VA must be able to comply with the requirements of agencies charged with enforcing the law and conducting investigations. VA must also be able to provide information to state or local agencies charged with protecting the public's health as set forth in state law. The routine use will be as follows:

On its own initiative, VA may disclose information, except for the names and home addresses of veterans and their dependents, to a Federal, State, local, tribal or foreign agency charged with the responsibility of

investigating or prosecuting civil, criminal or regulatory violations of law, or charged with enforcing or implementing the statute, regulation, rule or order issued pursuant thereto. On its own initiative, VA may also disclose the names and addresses of veterans and their dependents to a Federal agency charged with the responsibility of investigating or prosecuting civil, criminal or regulatory violations of law, or charged with enforcing or implementing the statute, regulation, rule or order issued pursuant thereto.

- Former routine use two (2) is deleted as procedures have been defined in VHA Handbook 1605.1, Privacy and Release of Information, Paragraph 16, ROI Within VA for Purposes other than Treatment, Payment, and/or Health Care Operation Without Authorization.

- Former routine use three (3) is renumbered to routine use two (2) and amended to remove the phrase “or at the initiation of the VA” as, upon internal review, it was found not relevant to the routine use.

- Former routine use four (4) is renumbered as routine use three (3).

- Former routine use five (5) is renumbered to routine use four (4) and amended to remove specific references under 44 U.S.C. The routine use will be as follows:

Disclosure may be made to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in records management inspections conducted under authority of 44 U.S.C.

- Former routine use six (6) is renumbered to routine use five (5) and amended to remove specific references under 28 U.S.C. The routine use will be as follows:

- Disclosure may be made to the Department of Justice and United States attorneys in defense or prosecution of litigation involving the United States, and to Federal agencies upon their request in connection with review of administrative tort claims filed under the Federal Tort Claims Act, 28 U.S.C.

- Former routine use seven (7) is renumbered to routine use six (6).

- Former routine use eight (8) is renumbered to routine use seven (7) and amended by deleting the text “disclosure may be made to a Federal, State or local government licensing board and/or to the Federation of State Medical Boards or a similar non-government entity which maintains records concerning individual employment histories or concerning the issuance, retention or revocation of licenses, certifications, or registration necessary to practice an occupation, profession or specialty; in order for the

Department to obtain information relevant to a Department decision concerning the hiring, retention or termination of an employee;” as private health information is not disclosed and the disclosure of information is not required.

- Former routine uses nine (9) and ten (10) are renumbered as routine uses eight (8) and nine (9).

- Former routine use eleven (11) is deleted as it duplicates routine use number one (1) and is no longer necessary.

- Former routine use twelve (12) is renumbered as routine use ten (10).

- Former routine use thirteen (13) is renumbered as routine use eleven (11) and amended to delete the phrase “VA-appointed” as it is no longer applicable to the representation of an employee.

- Former routine use fourteen (14) is renumbered as routine use twelve (12) and amended to modify the phrase “including the Office of the Special Counsel” to “and the Office of the Special Counsel” in order to address organizational changes.

- Former routine uses fifteen (15) through nineteen (19) are renumbered as routine uses thirteen (13) through seventeen (17).

- Former routine use twenty (20) is renumbered as routine use number eighteen (18) and amended to further define disclosure of information to the National Practitioner Data Bank and/or State Licensing Board in the state(s) in which a practitioner is licensed, in which the VA facility is located, and/or in which an act or omission occurred upon which a medical malpractice claim was based when the VA reports information concerning: (1) Any payment for the benefit of a physician, dentist, or other licensed health care practitioner which was made as the result of a settlement or judgment of a claim of medical malpractice if an appropriate determination is made in accordance with agency policy that payment was related to substandard care, professional incompetence or professional misconduct on the part of the individual; (2) a final decision which relates to possible incompetence or improper professional conduct that adversely affects the clinical privileges of a physician or dentist for a period longer than 30 days; or, (3) the acceptance of the surrender of clinical privileges or any restriction of such privileges by a physician or dentist either while under investigation by the health care entity relating to possible incompetence or improper professional conduct, or in return for not conducting such an investigation or proceeding.

- Former routine uses twenty-one through twenty-five (21–25) are renumbered as routine uses nineteen (19) through twenty-three (23).

The Privacy Act permits VA to disclose information about individuals without their consent for a routine use when the information will be used for a purpose that is compatible with the purpose for which VA collected the information. In all of the routine use disclosures described above, the recipient of the information will use the information in connection with a matter relating to one of VA’s programs, will use the information to provide a benefit to VA, or disclosure is required by law.

Under section 264, subtitle F of Title II of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) Public Law 104–191, 100 Stat. 1936, 2033–34 (1996), the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) published a final rule, as amended, establishing Standards for Privacy of Individually-Identifiable Health Information, 45 CFR parts 160 and 164. VHA may not disclose individually-identifiable health information (as defined in HIPAA and the Privacy Rule, 42 U.S.C. 1320(d)(6) and 45 CFR 164.501) pursuant to a routine use unless either: (a) The disclosure is required by law, or (b) the disclosure is also permitted or required by the HHS Privacy Rule. The disclosures of individually-identifiable health information contemplated in the routine uses published in this amended system of records notice are permitted under the Privacy Rule or required by law. However, to also have authority to make such disclosures under the Privacy Act, VA must publish these routine uses. Consequently, VA is publishing these routine uses and is adding a preliminary paragraph to the routine uses portion of the system of records notice stating that any disclosure pursuant to the routine uses in this system of records notice must be either required by law or permitted by the Privacy Rule before VHA may disclose the covered information.

The safeguards section of policies and practices for storing, retrieving, accessing, retaining and disposing of records in the system is amended to address access to file information and how the information is controlled, specifically to address access by remote data users such as Veteran Outreach Centers, Veteran Service Officers (VSO) with power of attorney to assist with claim processing, Veteran Benefits Administration (VBA) Regional Office staff for benefit determination and processing purposes, VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) staff conducting

official audits, investigations at the health care facility, or an OIG office location remote from the health care facility and other authorized individuals.

The system manager(s) and address is amended to reflect organizational changes.

The report of intent to publish an amended system of records and an advance copy of the system notice are being sent to the appropriate Congressional committees and to the Director of Office of Management and Budget (OMB), as required by 5 U.S.C. 552a(r) (Privacy Act) and guidelines issued by OMB (61 FR 6428), February 20, 1996.

Approved: January 22, 2004.

**Anthony J. Principi,**  
*Secretary of Veterans Affairs.*

#### 79VA19

##### SYSTEM NAME:

Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture (VistA) Records-VA.

##### SYSTEM LOCATION:

Records are maintained at each VA health care facility (in most cases, back-up computer tape information is stored at off-site locations). Address locations for VA facilities are listed in VA Appendix 1. In addition, information from these records or copies of records may be maintained at the Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW., Washington, DC, VA Data Processing Centers, VA Chief Information Officer (CIO) Field Offices, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Offices, and Employee Education Systems.

##### CATEGORIES OF INDIVIDUALS COVERED BY THE SYSTEM:

The records include information concerning current and former employees, applicants for employment, trainees, contractors, sub-contractors, contract personnel, students, providers and consultants, patients and members of their immediate family, volunteers, maintenance personnel, as well as individuals working collaboratively with the VA.

##### CATEGORIES OF RECORDS IN THE SYSTEM:

The records may include information related to:

1. Workload such as orders entered, verified, and edited (*e.g.*, engineering work orders, doctors' orders for patient care including nursing care, the scheduling and delivery of medications, consultations, radiology, laboratory and other diagnostic and therapeutic

examinations); results entered; items checked out and items in use (*e.g.*, library books, keys, x-rays, patient medical records, equipment, supplies, reference materials); work plans entered and the subsequent tracking (*e.g.*, construction projects, engineering work orders and equipment maintenance and repairs assigned to employees and status, duty schedules, work assignments, work requirements); reports of contact with individuals or groups; employees (including volunteers) work performance information (*e.g.*, duties and responsibilities assigned and completed, amount of supplies used, time used, quantity and quality of output, productivity reports, schedules of patients assigned and treatment to be provided);

2. Administrative procedures, duties, and assignments of certain personnel;

3. Computer access authorizations, computer applications available and used, information access attempts, frequency and time of use; identification of the person responsible for, currently assigned, or otherwise engaged in various categories of patient care or support of health care delivery; vehicle registration (motor vehicles and bicycles) and parking space assignments; community and special project participants/attendees (*e.g.*, sports events, concerts, National Wheelchair Games); employee work-related accidents. The record may include identifying information (*e.g.*, name, date of birth, age, sex, social security number, taxpayer identification number); address information (*e.g.*, home and/or mailing address, home telephone number, emergency contact information such as name, address, telephone number, and relationship); information related to training (*e.g.*, security, safety, in-service), education and continuing education (*e.g.*, name and address of schools and dates of attendance, courses attended and scheduled to attend, grades, type of degree, certificate, etc.); information related to military service and status; qualifications for employment (*e.g.*, license, degree, registration or certification, experience); vehicle information (*e.g.*, type make, model, license, and registration number); evaluation of clinical and/or technical skills; services or products purchased (*e.g.*, vendor name and address, details about and/or evaluation of service or product, price, fee, cost, dates purchased and delivered, employee workload, and productivity data); employee work-related injuries (cause, severity, type of injury, body part affected);

4. Financial information, such as service line and clinic budgets, projected and actual costs;

5. Supply information, such as services, materials and equipment ordered;

6. Abstract information (*e.g.*, data warehouses, environmental and epidemiological registries, etc.) is maintained in auxiliary paper and automated records;

7. Electronic messages; and

8. The social security number and universal personal identification number of health care providers.

##### AUTHORITY FOR MAINTENANCE OF THE SYSTEM:

Title 38, United States Code, section 7301(a).

##### PURPOSE(S):

The records and information may be used for statistical analysis to produce various management, workload tracking and follow-up reports; to track and evaluate the ordering and delivery of equipment, services and patient care; the planning, distribution and utilization of resources; the possession and/or use of equipment or supplies; the performance of vendors, equipment, and employees; and to provide clinical and administrative support to patient medical care. The data may be used for research purposes. The data may be used also for such purposes as assisting in the scheduling of tours of duties and job assignments of employees; the scheduling of patient treatment services, including nursing care, clinic appointments, surgery, diagnostic and therapeutic procedures; the repair and maintenance of equipment and for follow-up to determine that the actions were accomplished and to evaluate the results; the registration of vehicles and the assignment and utilization of parking spaces; to plan, schedule, and maintain rosters of patients, employees and others attending or participating in sports, recreational or other events (*e.g.*, National Wheelchair Games, concerts, picnics); for audits, reviews, and investigations conducted by staff of the health care facility, the Network Directors Office, VA Central Office, and the VA Office of Inspector General (OIG); for quality assurance audits, reviews, investigations and inspections; for law enforcement investigations; and for personnel management, evaluation and employee ratings, and performance evaluations.

##### ROUTINE USES OF RECORDS MAINTAINED IN THE SYSTEM, INCLUDING CATEGORIES OF USERS AND THE PURPOSES OF SUCH USES:

To the extent that records contained in the system include information

protected by 45 CFR parts 160 and 164, *i.e.*, individually-identifiable health information, and 38 U.S.C. 7332, *i.e.*, medical treatment information related to drug abuse, alcoholism or alcohol abuse, sickle cell anemia or infection with the human immunodeficiency virus, that information cannot be disclosed under a routine use unless there is also specific statutory authority in 38 U.S.C. 7332 and regulatory authority in 45 CFR parts 160 and 164 permitting disclosure.

1. VA may disclose on its own initiative any information in this system, except the names and home addresses of veterans and their dependents, which is relevant to a suspected or reasonably imminent violation of law, whether civil, criminal or regulatory in nature and whether arising by general or program statute or by regulation, rule or order issued pursuant thereto, to a Federal, state, local, tribal, or foreign agency charged with the responsibility of investigating or prosecuting such violation, or charged with enforcing or implementing the statute, regulation, rule or order. On its own initiative, VA may also disclose the names and addresses of veterans and their dependents to a Federal agency charged with the responsibility of investigating or prosecuting civil, criminal or regulatory violations of law, or charged with enforcing or implementing the statute, regulation, rule or order issued pursuant thereto.

2. Disclosure may be made to an agency in the executive, legislative, or judicial branch, or the District of Columbia government in response to its request, in connection with the hiring of an employee, the issuance of a security clearance, the conducting of a security or suitability investigation of an individual, the letting of a contract, the issuance of a license, grant, or other benefits by the requesting agency, or the lawful statutory, administrative, or investigative purpose of the agency to the extent that the information is relevant and necessary to the requesting agency's decision.

3. Disclosure may be made to a Congressional office from the record of an individual in response to an inquiry from the Congressional office made at the request of that individual.

4. Disclosure may be made to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in records management inspections conducted under authority of 44 U.S.C.

5. Disclosure may be made to the Department of Justice and United States attorneys in defense or prosecution of litigation involving the United States, and to Federal agencies upon their request in connection with review of

administrative tort claims filed under the Federal Tort Claims Act, 28 U.S.C.

6. Hiring, performance, or other personnel-related information may be disclosed to any facility with which there is or there is proposed to be an affiliation, sharing agreement, contract, or similar arrangement for purposes of establishing, maintaining, or expanding any such relationship.

7. Disclosure may be made to inform a Federal agency, licensing boards or the appropriate non-government entities about the health care practices of a terminated, resigned or retired health care employee whose professional health care activity so significantly failed to conform to generally accepted standards of professional medical practice as to raise reasonable concern for the health and safety of patients receiving medical care in the private sector or from another Federal agency. These records may also be disclosed as part of an ongoing computer matching program to accomplish these purposes.

8. For program review purposes, and the seeking of accreditation and/or certification, disclosure may be made to survey teams of the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), College of American Pathologists, American Association of Blood Banks, and similar national accreditation agencies or boards with whom VA has a contract or agreement to conduct such reviews but only to the extent that the information is necessary and relevant to the review.

9. Disclosure may be made to a state or local government entity or national certifying body which has the authority to make decisions concerning the issuance, retention or revocation of licenses, certifications or registrations required to practice a health care profession, when requested in writing by an investigator or supervisory official of the licensing entity or national certifying body for the purpose of making a decision concerning the issuance, retention or revocation of the license, certification or registration of a named health care professional.

10. Disclosure may be made to officials of labor organizations recognized under 5 U.S.C. chapter 71 when relevant and necessary to their duties of exclusive representation concerning personnel policies, practices, and matters affecting working conditions.

11. Disclosure may be made to the representative of an employee, including all notices, determinations, decisions, or other written communications issued to the employee in connection with an examination ordered by VA under medical

evaluation (formerly fitness-for-duty) examination procedures or Department-filed disability retirement procedures.

12. Disclosure may be made to officials of the Merit Systems Protection Board, and the Office of the Special Counsel, when requested in connection with appeals, special studies of the civil service and other merit systems, review of rules and regulations, investigation of alleged or possible prohibited personnel practices, and such other functions, promulgated in 5 U.S.C. 1205 and 1206, or as may be authorized by law.

13. Disclosure may be made to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission when requested in connection with investigations of alleged or possible discrimination practices, examination of Federal affirmative employment programs, compliance with the Uniform Guidelines of Employee Selection Procedures, or other functions vested in the Commission by the President's Reorganization Plan No. 1 of 1978.

14. Disclosure may be made to the Federal Labor Relations Authority, including its General Counsel, when requested in connection with investigation and resolution of allegations of unfair labor practices, in connection with the resolution of exceptions to arbitrator awards when a question of material fact is raised and matters before the Federal Service Impasses Panel.

15. Disclosure may be made in consideration and selection of employees for incentive awards and other honors and to publicize those granted. This may include disclosure to other public and private organizations, including news media, which grant or publicize employee awards or honors.

16. Disclosure may be made to consider employees for recognition through administrative and quality step increases and to publicize those granted. This may include disclosure to other public and private organizations, including news media, which grant or publicize employee recognition.

17. Identifying information such as name, address, social security number and other information as is reasonably necessary to identify such individual, may be disclosed to the National Practitioner Data Bank at the time of hiring and/or clinical privileging/re-privileging of health care practitioners and at other times as deemed necessary by VA in order for VA to obtain information relevant to a Department decision concerning the hiring, privileging/re-privileging, retention or termination of the applicant or employee.

18. Relevant information may be disclosed to the National Practitioner Data Bank and/or State Licensing Board in the state(s) in which a practitioner is licensed, in which the VA facility is located, and/or in which an act or omission occurred upon which a medical malpractice claim was based when VA reports information concerning: (1) Any payment for the benefit of a physician, dentist, or other licensed health care practitioner which was made as the result of a settlement or judgment of a claim of medical malpractice if an appropriate determination is made in accordance with agency policy that payment was related to substandard care, professional incompetence or professional misconduct on the part of the individual; (2) a final decision which relates to possible incompetence or improper professional conduct that adversely affects the clinical privileges of a physician or dentist for a period longer than 30 days; or, (3) the acceptance of the surrender of clinical privileges or any restriction of such privileges by a physician or dentist either while under investigation by the health care entity relating to possible incompetence or improper professional conduct, or in return for not conducting such an investigation or proceeding. These records may also be disclosed as part of a computer matching program to accomplish these purposes.

19. Disclosure of medical record data, excluding name and address, unless name and address is furnished by the requester, may be made to epidemiological and other research facilities for research purposes determined to be necessary and proper, and approved by the Under Secretary for Health.

20. Disclosure of name(s) and address(es) of present or former personnel of the Armed Services, and/or their dependents, may be made to: (a) a Federal department or agency, at the written request of the head or designee of that agency; or (b) directly to a contractor or subcontractor of a Federal department or agency, for the purpose of conducting Federal research necessary to accomplish a statutory purpose of an agency. When disclosure of this information is made directly to a contractor, VA may impose applicable conditions on the department, agency, and/or contractor to ensure the appropriateness of the disclosure to the contractor.

21. The social security number, universal personal identification number and other identifying information of a health care provider may be disclosed to a third party where

the third party requires the agency to provide that information before it will pay for medical care provided by VA.

22. Relevant information may be disclosed to individuals, organizations, private or public agencies, etc., with whom VA has a contract or agreement to perform such services as VA may deem practical for the purposes of laws administered by VA, in order for the contractor and/or subcontractor to perform the services of the contract or agreement.

23. Disclosure of relevant health care information may be made to individuals or organizations (private or public) with whom VA has a contract or sharing agreement for the provision of health care, administrative or financial services.

**POLICIES AND PRACTICES FOR STORING, RETRIEVING, ACCESSING, RETAINING, AND DISPOSING OF RECORDS IN THE SYSTEM:**

**STORAGE:**

Records are maintained on paper, microfilm, magnetic tape, disk, or laser optical media. In most cases, copies of back-up computer files are maintained at off-site locations.

**RETRIEVABILITY:**

Records are retrieved by name, social security number or other assigned identifiers of the individuals on whom they are maintained.

**SAFEGUARDS:**

1. Access to VA working and storage areas is restricted to VA employees on a "need-to-know" basis. Strict control measures are enforced to ensure that disclosure to these individuals is also based on this same principle. Generally, VA file areas are locked after normal duty hours and the facilities are protected from outside access by the Federal Protective Service or other security personnel.

2. Access to computer rooms at health care facilities is generally limited by appropriate locking devices and restricted to authorized VA employees and vendor personnel. Automated Data Processing (ADP) peripheral devices are placed in secure areas (areas that are locked or have limited access) or are otherwise protected. Information in VistA may be accessed by authorized VA employees. Access to file information is controlled at two levels. The systems recognize authorized employees by series of individually unique passwords/codes as a part of each data message, and the employees are limited to only that information in the file which is needed in the performance of their official duties. Information that is downloaded from

VistA and maintained on personal computers is afforded similar storage and access protections as the data that is maintained in the original files. Access to information stored on automated storage media at other VA locations is controlled by individually unique passwords/codes. Access by remote data users such as Veteran Outreach Centers, Veteran Service Officers (VSO) with power of attorney to assist with claim processing, Veteran Benefits Administration (VBA) Regional Office staff for benefit determination and processing purposes, OIG staff conducting official audits, investigations or inspections at the health care facility, or an OIG office location remote from the health care facility and other authorized individuals is controlled in the same manner.

3. Information downloaded from VistA and maintained by the OIG headquarters and Field Offices on automated storage media is secured in storage areas for facilities to which only OIG staff have access. Paper documents are similarly secured. Access to paper documents and information on automated storage media is limited to OIG employees who have a need for the information in the performance of their official duties. Access to information stored on automated storage media is controlled by individually unique passwords/codes.

**RETENTION AND DISPOSAL:**

Paper records and information stored on electronic storage media are maintained and disposed of in accordance with records disposition authority approved by the Archivist of the United States.

**SYSTEM MANAGER(S) AND ADDRESS:**

The official responsible for policies and procedures is the Director, Health Systems Design and Development (192), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20420. The local official responsible for maintaining the system is the Director of the facility where the individual is or was associated.

**NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE:**

Individuals who wish to determine whether this system of records contains information about them should contact the VA facility location at which they are or were employed or made or have contact. Inquiries should include the person's full name, social security number, dates of employment, date(s) of contact, and return address.

**RECORD ACCESS PROCEDURE:**

Individuals seeking information regarding access to and contesting of

records in this system may write, call or visit the VA facility location where they are or were employed or made contact.

**CONTESTING RECORD PROCEDURES:**

(See Record Access Procedures, above.)

**RECORD SOURCE CATEGORIES:**

Information in this system of records is provided by the individual, supervisors, other employees, personnel

records, or obtained from their interaction with the system.

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