



## 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

### VA Outreach to OEF/OIF Veterans



Dr. James B. Peake, Secretary of Veterans Affairs kicked off the outreach campaign by calling an injured OEF/OIF veteran to highlight VA services that were available to him.

In May, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) began contacting nearly 570,000 recent combat veterans to ensure they knew about VA's medical services and other benefits.

"We will reach out and touch every veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) to let them know we are here for them," said Dr. James B. Peake, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "VA is committed to getting these veterans the help they need and deserve."

A "Combat Veteran Call Center" telephoned two distinct populations of veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan.

In the first phase, calls went to an estimated 15,500 veterans who were sick or injured while serving in Iraq or Afghanistan. VA offered to appoint a care manager to work with them if they did not already have one. Care managers ensure veterans receive appropriate care and know about their VA benefits.

For 5 years after their discharge from the military, these combat veterans have special access to VA health care. VA personnel have been deployed to the military's major medical centers to assist wounded servicemembers and their families during the transition to civilian lives.

The second phase launched in June is targeting 550,000 OEF/OIF veterans who have been discharged from active duty but have not contacted VA for services. Once contacted, veterans are informed about VA's benefits and services.

"We will leave no stone unturned to reach these veterans," said Dr. Edward Huycke, Chief of the Veterans Affairs - Department of Defense coordination office.



**Significant Trends, Impacts, Use and Verification of FY 2008 Results**

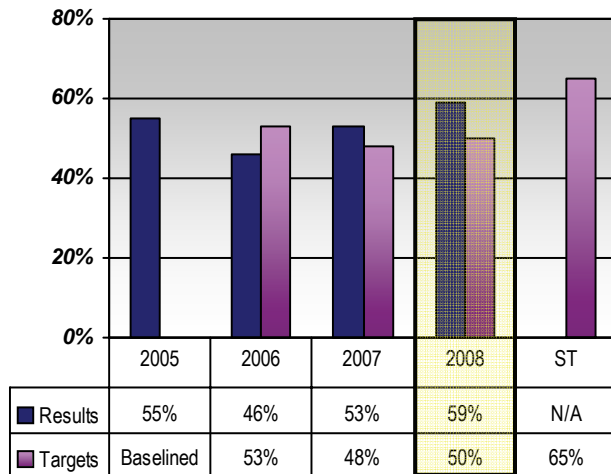
<b>Supporting Measure</b>															
<b>PERCENT OF APPOINTMENTS FOR PRIMARY CARE SCHEDULED WITHIN 30 DAYS OF DESIRED DATE FOR VETERANS AND SERVICEMEMBERS RETURNING FROM A COMBAT ZONE</b>															
<u>Performance Trends</u>		<u>Impact on the Veteran</u>													
<table border="1" style="margin-top: 10px;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2007</th> <th>2008</th> <th>ST</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Results</td> <td>95%</td> <td>97%</td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Targets</td> <td>90%</td> <td>96%</td> <td>97%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>					2007	2008	ST	Results	95%	97%	N/A	Targets	90%	96%	97%
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Results	95%	97%	N/A												
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<p>ST = Strategic Target</p>															
<u>How VA Verifies Results Data for Accuracy</u>		<u>How VA Leadership Uses Results Data</u>													
<p>VA's VistA scheduling software captures data and requires minimal interpretation to ensure accuracy. VA's data quality/accuracy standards are applied, and data pulls undergo audits and ongoing verification to ensure accuracy. Collection staff is skilled and trained in proper procedures of the scheduling package.</p>		<p>Delivery of primary care is critical to preventative health care and timely disease identification for all Americans.</p> <p>Timely access to VA medical staff and facilities is therefore critical to servicemembers returning from a combat zone. With a 96 percent result, VA is confident that veterans are receiving primary care when and where they need it.</p> <p>VA uses the results of this measure to inform and drive quality improvement activities that promote shorter waiting times by improving efficiencies, addressing missed opportunities, and providing management with information to make resource decisions as they relate to servicemembers returning from a combat zone. For example, a) during FY 2008, 29 VHA facilities with the largest numbers of patients waiting to be seen were paired (in order to receive coaching) with 29 facilities of the same complexity levels with the fewest numbers of patients waiting. Excellent results have accrued; b) VHA has defined staff support ratios essential to optimizing Primary Care panel management. Tracking of staff support ratios is ongoing; during FY 2008, facilities in which staff support ratios were found to be sub-optimal were required to provide action plans and timelines to bring the facilities into compliance.</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**



ST = Strategic Target

**Impact on the Veteran**

The Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) and Quick Start programs provide a seamless transition from the DoD health care system into the VA medical and benefits system.

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. The Quick Start program helps servicemembers with fewer than 60 days to discharge or who do not meet the BDD criterion requiring availability for all examinations prior to discharge to submit a claim prior to discharge.

In 2008, VA received more than 47,000 pre-discharge BDD and Quick Start claims.

**How VA Verifies Results Data for Accuracy**

Fully automated VETSNET Operations Report (VOR) data are available on a continuous basis regarding the number of BDD and Quick Start claims received and completed. C&P staff reviews the data monthly to identify trends in the number and types of claims being filed through the BDD and Quick Start claims process. Participation rate information is calculated at the end of the fiscal year by DoD.

**How VA Leadership Uses 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 for 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**

Pre-discharge claims for compensation are accepted within 180 days prior to separation at any intake site for National Guard members, Reservists, and those undergoing medical and physical evaluation boards.

In November 2007, VA and the Department of Defense began the Disability Evaluation System (DES) Pilot in the National Capital Region for those servicemembers entering the medical evaluation board and physical evaluation board process. In FY 2008, 712 servicemembers participated in the pilot. The pilot program aims to ensure that all servicemembers separating from service have the opportunity to enroll in the VA Health Care System. VA and DoD are exploring opportunities to expand the pilot beyond the National Capital Region.

In May 2008, the VA Outreach Office initiated a pilot demobilization program with the Army. The initial visit was made to Ft. Bragg, North Carolina, and Camp Shelby, Mississippi. The purpose of this initiative is to inform demobilizing reserve component (RC) combat veterans of their enhanced VA health care

benefits during their mandatory demobilization separation briefings; offer assistance to demobilizing RC soldiers in completion of the enrollment form 1010EZ and collect completed forms; and develop a similar process for demobilizing RC combat veterans from the other services. VA encourages 100 percent enrollment at the demobilization sites. VA has executed outreach and enrollment programs at 15 Army sites, 4 Navy ports, 3 U.S. Marine bases, and will initiate support at Air Force and Coast Guard demobilization sites in the near future. Presently over 4,000 demobilizing RC veterans have completed the enrollment forms on site at demobilization stations across the Nation.

In July 2008, VA expanded the Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) program to servicemembers separating from installations that do not have local memoranda of understanding with VA in place.

Because of the BDD program's unique process, it is being used to evaluate the viability of "paperless claims processing." All contents of a BDD claims folder, including a servicemember's application for benefits, VA's duty to assist notification letter, and Service Treatment records are scanned into the Virtual VA imaging and document management repository to establish a complete "e-Folder." VBA employees review the e-Folder rather than the paper claims folder to support any necessary development and conduct the rating decision through the use of the VETSNET suite of applications. Effective in August 2008, all new BDD claims are processed in the paperless claims environment.

### **Other Important Results**

VA is actively participating in the DoD Post Deployment Health Reassessment (PDHRA) program at Reserve and Guard locations by providing information on VA care and benefits, enrolling Reservists and Guardsmen in the VA healthcare system, and arranging appointments for referred servicemembers. Since inception in 2007, over 208,450 Reserve and Guard members completed the PDHRA on-site screen resulting



in over 43,700 referrals to VHA facilities and 20,025 referrals to Vet Centers.

VA's Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (CFBCI) develops and coordinates VA's outreach efforts to disseminate information more effectively to faith-based and other community organizations (FBCOs) in the provision of services to OEF/OIF veterans. FBCOs partner with local VA programs within the community to enhance service delivery options.

An example of this effort is the VA Chaplain Service Veterans Community Outreach Initiatives, which provide training to local clergy in the community. Local VA chaplains conduct half-day training events throughout the country to provide education and resources for clergy members and others regarding physical, mental,

and spiritual health issues experienced by some returning warriors and their families. VA Chaplain Service has sponsored 65 Education Day Events around the Nation and distributed over 2,600 Resource Information Packets on caring for returning warriors and their families. Chaplain Open Houses provide local FBCOs with information about existing programs and how they can participate in these programs. VA hosted 23 Open Houses, which reached nearly 700 participants.

#### **Data Verification and 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 217.



## Complete Listing of Measures Supporting Strategic Objective 2.1

**Green or G:** Target was met or exceeded. **Yellow or Y:** Target was not met, but the deviation was not significant or material. **Red or R:** Target was not met, but the deviation was significant or material.

Strategic Goal/Measure (Key Measures in Bold)	Past Results				FY 2008		Strategic Target										
	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	Results	Targets											
<b>Strategic Goal 2: Ensure a smooth transition for veterans from active military service to civilian life.</b>																	
Objective 2.1: Ease the reentry of new veterans into civilian life by increasing awareness of, access to, and use of VA health care, benefits, and services.																	
<table border="1" style="float: right; width: 150px;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">Recap</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Green</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Yellow</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Red</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total</b></td> <td><b>6</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>								Recap		Green	6	Yellow	0	Red	0	<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>
Recap																	
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Percent of veterans returning from a combat zone who respond "yes, completely" to survey questions on the following:							
If they believe that their VA provider listened to them (through July)	N/A	N/A	Baseline	64%	* 79% G	70%	76%
If they had trust and confidence in their VA provider (through July)	N/A	N/A	Baseline	59%	* 75% G	70%	76%
Percent of appointments for primary care scheduled within 30 days of desired date for veterans and servicemembers returning from a combat zone	N/A	N/A	Baseline	95%	97% G	96%	97%
Percent of unclassified electronic DoD health records available electronically to VA clinicians for separated servicemembers (VHA)	N/A	N/A	N/A	100%	100% G	100%	100%
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 (Compensation)	N/A	55%	46%	53%	59% G	50%	65%
Number of outpatient visits at Joint Ventures and significant sites (Facilities providing 500 or more outpatient visits and/or admissions per year) (VHA)	N/A	N/A	121,229	102,595	N/A	126,128	133,845
Number of pilot, demonstration, and existing programs implemented by VA in which faith-based and community organizations participate (CFBCI)	N/A	4	6	12	12 G	12	14





## 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

### Enhanced Educational Benefits for America's Veterans



National Guard and the Reserves who serve on active duty will see a significant increase in their educational benefits.

Some members of the National Guard and the Reserves who serve on active duty will see a significant increase in their educational benefits, thanks to new improvements to the education benefit program.

“Reservists and National Guardsmen who serve multiple tours on active duty may get an increase in their educational benefits, in keeping with the value of their service to our Nation,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake in March.

Under new provisions, members who accumulate 3 years on active duty, regardless of breaks in service, may be eligible for the maximum payment under the Reserve Education Assistance Program (REAP). Previously, reservists and guardsmen had to serve 2 continuous years on active duty to receive the highest payment.

The new law, part of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008, also expands the period of eligibility for certain Guard and Reserve members who complete their service obligation before separation from the

selected reserve.

Additionally, some REAP-eligible National Guard and Reserve members may now make an extra contribution to the Department of Defense to increase their monthly benefit rates.

Participants in REAP and the Montgomery GI Bill program for the Selected Reserve who pursue non-degree programs lasting less than 2 years may also be eligible to receive accelerated payments.

For more information on changes to VA's GI Bill benefits, go to **Web:** [www.GIBILL.va.gov](http://www.GIBILL.va.gov) or call 1-888-GIBILL1 (or 1-888-442-4551).



**Significant Trends, Impacts, Use and Verification of FY 2008 Results**

Key Measure																								
AVERAGE DAYS TO COMPLETE ORIGINAL EDUCATION CLAIMS																								
Performance Trends				Impact on the Veteran																				
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>2004</td> <td>2005</td> <td>2006</td> <td>2007</td> <td>2008</td> <td>ST</td> </tr> <tr> <td>26</td> <td>33</td> <td>40</td> <td>32</td> <td>19</td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> <tr> <td>24</td> <td>25</td> <td>27</td> <td>35</td> <td>24</td> <td>10</td> </tr> </table>				2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	ST	26	33	40	32	19	N/A	24	25	27	35	24	10	<p>The timeliness of completing original education claims improved from 32 days in 2007 to 19 days in 2008. Thus, compared with 2007, veterans waited on average 13 fewer days to receive their initial award notification and payment. Timely payments to veterans for educational claims are critical to helping them meet their educational goals.</p>		
2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	ST																			
26	33	40	32	19	N/A																			
24	25	27	35	24	10																			
				How VA Leadership Uses Results Data																				
<p>ST = Strategic Target</p>				<p>VA management uses performance results 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>																				
How VA Verifies Results Data for Accuracy				<p>The improvement in performance during 2008 was primarily due to the continued performance of the Education Call Center that was established in 2007. The Call Center enabled Regional Processing Office (RPO) employees to process more claims and reduce the backlog of pending claims. Employees at the Call Center answered education program inquiries from servicemembers, reservists, veterans, and dependents.</p>																				
<p>Quality review staff verifies the data. Accuracy of timeliness data entry for quarterly quality review sample cases is examined to determine reliability of automated data reports.</p>																								
<p>There are documented procedures to guide staff responsible for verifying the accuracy of timeliness data, and for those staff who enter the source data. Data are captured electronically and Distribution of Operational Resources (DOOR) reports are automatically generated. Data are analyzed monthly and verified quarterly.</p>																								

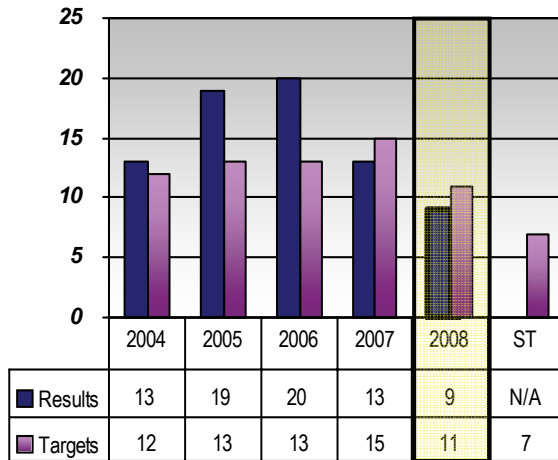




**Key Measure**

**AVERAGE DAYS TO COMPLETE SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION CLAIMS**

**Performance Trends**



ST = Strategic Target

**Impact on the Veteran**

The timeliness of completing supplemental education claims improved from 13 days in 2007 to 9 days in 2008. Thus, compared with 2007, veterans waited on average 4 fewer days to receive their award notification and payment. Timely payments to veterans for educational claims are critical to helping veterans meet their educational goals.

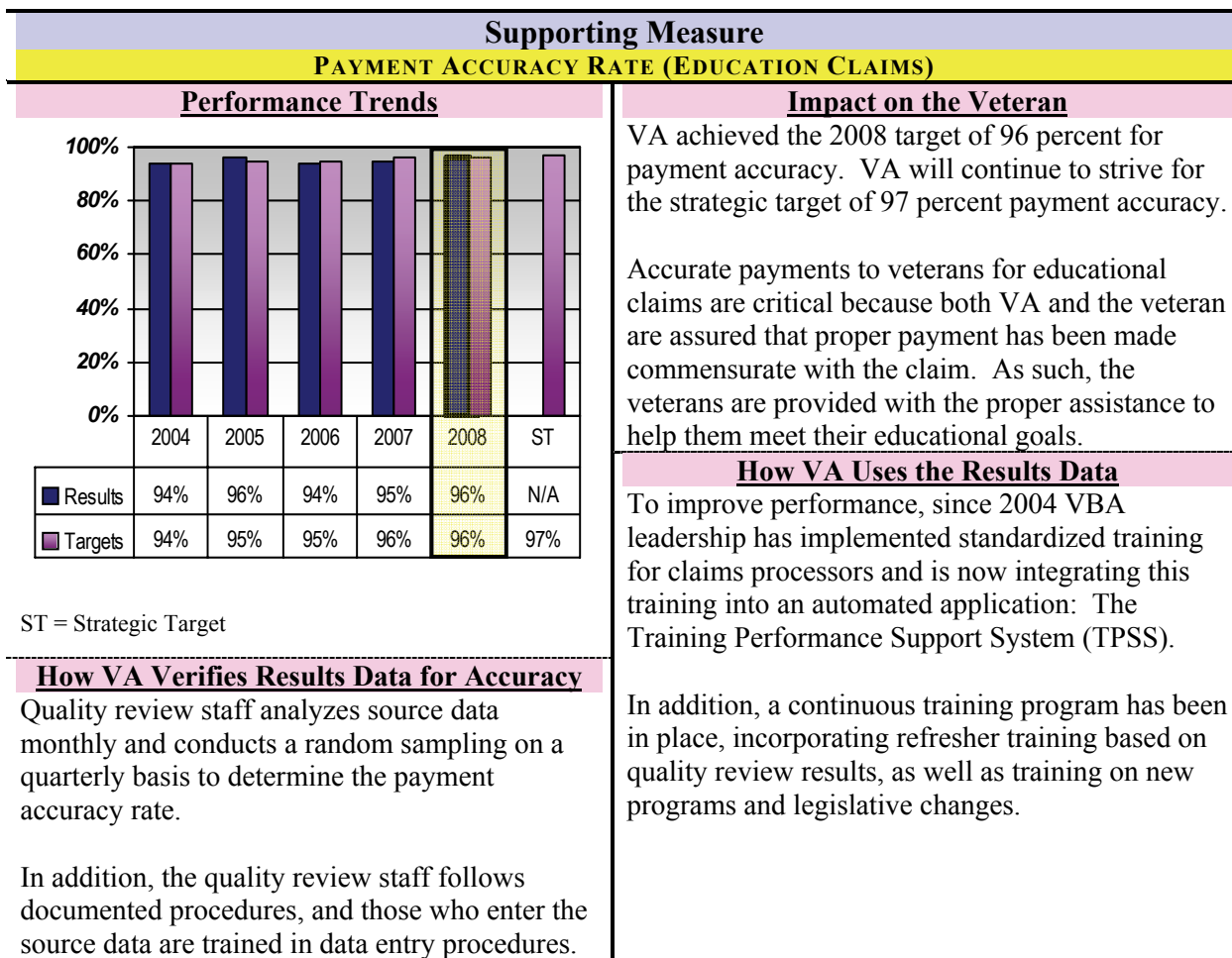
**How VA Uses the Results Data**

VA management uses performance results to pinpoint areas of performance weakness and then takes appropriate corrective actions. As stated on the previous page, the formation of the Educational Call Center in 2007 enabled VA to process more supplemental claims and reduce the backlog of pending claims.

**How VA Verifies Results Data for Accuracy**

Quality review staff verifies the data. Accuracy of timeliness data entry for quarterly quality review sample cases is examined to determine reliability of automated data reports.

There are documented procedures to guide staff responsible for verifying the accuracy of timeliness data, and for those staff who enter the source data. Data are captured electronically and Distribution of Operational Resources (DOOR) reports are automatically generated. Data are analyzed monthly and verified quarterly.



### Additional Performance Information for 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 77 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 2008, including the following:

- Issued instructions to implement Centralized Certification of Enrollment for educational institutions.



- Issued instructions for processing National Test claims, which allow VA to reimburse claimants for the fee charged for one national test for admission to institutions of higher learning under the Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve and the Reserve Educational Assistance Program.
- Issued instructions for processing Reserve Educational Assistance Program additional contribution payments.
- Removed the signature requirement for hard copy applications for education benefits, thus reducing the workload and improving claims processing time. The signature requirement is not required by law.

#### **Other Important Results**

In 2008, Education Service implemented nine recommendations from its 2006 RPO workshop. The recommendations primarily dealt with policy and information technology systems-related modifications that improved VA's ability to process claims more efficiently.

#### **Data Quality**

VA is migrating information technology applications to the VBA corporate environment. We have begun development of the new Work Study Management System (WSMS), which

creates and manages contracts and timesheets associated with work study benefits, and the new Flight, On-the-job training, Correspondence, Apprenticeship System (FOCAS). Presently, both WSMS and the legacy FOCAS applications are single-user, stand-alone applications residing at the four VA RPOs. The current development efforts will move these applications to the VBA Web-based enterprise architecture.

Consolidating the stand-alone applications into a single database is expected to improve the quality of data for both work study and FOCAS claims. WSMS is scheduled to be deployed in March 2009, and FOCAS is scheduled to be deployed in September 2009.

#### **Data Verification and Measure Validation**

More details on data verification and measure validation for the two key measures that support this objective is provided in the Key Measures Data Table on page 228.



## Complete Listing of Measures Supporting Strategic Objective 2.2

**Green or G:** Target was met or exceeded. **Yellow or Y:** Target was not met, but the deviation was not significant or material. **Red or R:** Target was not met, but the deviation was significant or material.

Strategic Goal/Measure (Key Measures in Bold)	Past Results				FY 2008		Strategic Target
	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	Results	Targets	

<b>Recap</b>	
Green	6
Yellow	0
Red	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>

**Strategic Goal 2: Ensure a smooth transition for veterans from active military service to civilian life.**

Objective 2.2: 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.

Average days to complete original education claims	26	33	40	32	19 G	24	10
Average days to complete supplemental education claims	13	19	20	13	9 G	11	7
Montgomery GI Bill usage rate (%): Veterans who have passed their 10-year eligibility period (Estimate)	71%	71%	70%	70%	* 71% G	71%	80%
Customer satisfaction-high rating (Education)	86%	(1) N/A	(1) N/A	(1) N/A	(1) N/A	89%	95%
Telephone Activities - Blocked call rate % (Education)	20%	38%	43%	32%	4% G	20%	10%
Telephone Activities - Abandoned call rate % (Education) (a) Corrected	10%	17%	20%	(a) 14%	5% G	10%	5%
Payment accuracy rate % (Education)	94%	96%	94%	95%	96% G	96%	97%
<b>Measures Under Development</b>							
Percent of Montgomery GI Bill participants who successfully completed an education or training program	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	TBD	TBD
Percentage of beneficiaries that believe their VA educational assistance has been either very helpful or helpful in the attainment of their educational or vocational goal	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	(1) N/A	TBD	TBD
(1) No customer satisfaction survey was performed for 2005-2008. VBA anticipates that a survey office will be in place in 2009 and that the first survey will be conducted in 2010 for 2009.							

\* These are partial or estimated data; final data will be published in the FY 2010 Congressional Budget and/or the FY 2009 Performance and Accountability Report.