VIReC RESEARCHERS' GUIDE TO VA DATA

Data Issues Brief	July 2006

VIReC UPDATES:

1. VIReC's Intranet Website Address Has Changed

Please update your Bookmarks to the new VIReC Intranet website address: www.virec.research.va.gov.

VA DATA AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS:

2. Scope Changes to Function Task Codes for VA AAC Dataset Access

During June, some Austin Administration Center (AAC) users discovered that their function task code privileges no longer provided access to datasets used in the past. If you get violations at AAC (reports are empty, jobs not running, etc.) it may be due to changes in access privileges on RMTPRD.MED. You should call the Austin Service Desk technicians 24 hours a day, 7 days per week at 512-326-6780 or 800-883-4100 (TDD 512-326-6638) or send an email to asd@va.gov to learn if the problem is related to these changes and to obtain the new function task codes that need to be added to your account.

The protocol for gaining access to these datasets has also changed. The local Automated Customer Registration System (ACRS) POC can no longer grant access through ACRS. To regain access privileges, you must submit a signed AAC access request form (VAF9957) requesting that the specific function task codes be added to your account. ACC will consider granting access on a case by case basis.

The VAF9957 form is available as a template. Data on the form must be in a type font (no handwritten entries except signature) and the signature block must be completed with both name and title of persons approving access. Print the Form VAF9957 and then have the approving officials ink sign. Fax this form to ACC at 512-326-6069.

The VIReC website discusses AAC dataset access including the protocol for obtaining access to datasets at the AAC, function task codes, and a downloadable Form VAF9957 (http://www.virec.research.va.gov/Support/Training-NewUsersToolkit/ACRSrequest.htm).

3. VA Event Capture Data Available in National FY2006 Dataset (DSS NDE)

Event Capture is a software package that allows data capture of workload and cost for a variety of departments with no primary VistA transaction system. Fiscal year (FY) 2006 Decision Support System (DSS) National Data Extracts (NDEs) include a data extract from the Event Capture package giving product level information for Social Work Service, Physical Medicine/Rehabilitation, Home and Community Based Health Care, Clinical Nutrition, Chaplain Service, Speech and Audiology (for sites not using QUASAR), costs and bed days for Community and State Nursing Homes, and patient work hours for Compensated Work Therapy. DSS provides additional information about the NDE for Event Capture in the NDE technical manual available at their VA Intranet website.

4. VA NHCU Treating Specialties

Beginning July 1, 2006, VA Nursing Home Care Unit (NHCU) new admissions will be categorized as "short-stay" or "long-stay." Short stay patients have an expected LOS of 90 days or less. Their treating specialties include: rehabilitation, skilled nursing care, restorative care, maintenance care for those awaiting alternative placement, psychiatric care, dementia care, geriatric evaluation and management, hospice, and respite care. Long stay patients have an expected LOS greater than 90 days and treating specialties for these patients include dementia care, skilled nursing care, maintenance care, psychiatric care or chronically mentally ill care, and spinal cord injury and disorders. The current treating specialty code for NHCU (89) will be discontinued on August 1, 2006. Detailed information about these treating specialty changes can be found in the VHA Directive 2006-014 on the Internet at http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1394.

DATABASE RESEARCH:

5. Paper Published on New VA Race/Ethnicity Data Collection Standards

A paper describing the transition to new race/ethnicity data collection standards in the Department of Veterans Affairs is available on the *Population Health Metrics* website: http://www.pophealthmetrics.com/content/4/1/7. Dr. Min Woong-Sohn and colleagues in collaboration with VIReC report that agreement between observer-recorded and self-reported race/ethnicity is very good, however the authors report that observation is not a reliable method of race/ethnicity data collection for non-African American minorities.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES:

6. July 18 Clinical Informatics Cyber Seminar Series Focuses on Health Information Technology and Health Information Exchange

The speaker for this month's Cyber Seminar on Clinical Informatics, sponsored by VIReC and the Center of Excellence on Implementing Evidence-Based Practice, is Dr. Atif Zafar. Dr. Zafar is Assistant Professor of Medicine at Indiana University School of Medicine, Information Technology Director for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's (AHRQ) Primary Care Practice-Based Research Networks Resource Center, Academic Staff Partner with the AHRQ National Resource Center for Health Information Technology, and a researcher with the Indianapolis VA Center of Excellence on Implementing Evidence-Based Practice. The Cyber Seminars on Clinical Informatics take place at 12 pm ET on the third Tuesday of each month. Interested parties can register at https://hsrdtraining.webex.com/ by clicking on the upcoming tab.

7. ResDAC To Hold Medicare and Medicaid Data Training in Minneapolis

The Research Data Assistance Center (ResDAC) will host two upcoming workshops in Minneapolis directed at users of data from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS): (1) CMS 102: Conducting Research with Medicaid Claims Data (Sept. 12 - 14). CMS has revised the format of the Medicaid data files that they create and release for researchers. ResDAC's CMS102 workshop provides information on the development, structure and application of the Medicaid Analytic Extract (MAX) files. (2) CMS 301: Using SEER/Medicare Data for Research (Sept. 19). This course describes the SEER/Medicare database and addresses issues that arise when using SEER/Medicare data rather than standard Medicare data. ResDAC is a CMS contractor that provides free assistance to academic, government, and non-profit researchers interested in using Medicare and/or Medicaid data for their research. Detailed information is at http://www.resdac.umn.edu/training/workshops.asp.