



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

July 31, 2007

MEMORANDUM FOR UNDER SECRETARIES, ASSISTANT SECRETARIES,
OTHER KEY OFFICIALS, AND FIELD FACILITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: *VA Strategic Plan for Employees*

I am pleased to distribute the *VA Strategic Plan for Employees*. This document, developed in collaboration with VA's Administrations and Staff Offices, is intended for distribution to every VA employee. The primary purpose of the Plan is to communicate VA's strategic goals and objectives to all employees and to provide a *line-of-sight* for employees to see how they contribute to the achievement of the overall VA mission.

The Plan is an abbreviated version of the *VA Strategic Plan for FY 2006 – 2011*. Based on your feedback, this plan is smaller, easier to use, and more portable than prior plans for employees. It highlights VA's mission, vision, core values, strategic goals and objectives, selected *representative* performance measures, and targets.

The *VA Strategic Plan for Employees* includes a fact sheet on Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) veterans and their participation in VA programs, and diagrams of key VHA and VBA business processes. One section, *Who We Serve*, provides employees with an overall picture of veterans and the services provided to them. Another section, *Who We Are*, gives employees a more complete understanding of the history, size, composition, and focus of our Department. Lastly, included in the Plan is a description of VA's goal to achieve a *Gold Standard for Data Security* to ensure the privacy of our veterans and employees.

Please share the information contained in the Plan with your staff. I expect all facility managers to meet with their employees to discuss how your organization contributes to the achievement of our goals and objectives, and to ensure that all employees have a clear understanding of the strategic plan established for the Department.

The *VA Strategic Plan for Employees* is also available on the VA Web site at www1.va.gov/op3. If you have questions regarding this document, please contact Curt Marshall, Director, Strategic Planning Service, at (202) 273-7522.


R. James Nicholson

Attachment

Department of Veterans Affairs

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR EMPLOYEES



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, DC 20420

JULY 2007

OUR MISSION AND VISION

VA MISSION STATEMENT

To fulfill President Lincoln's promise –

**“To care for him who shall
have borne the battle, and
for his widow, and his orphan”**

– by serving and honoring
the men and women who
are America's veterans.

VA VISION

To provide veterans the world-class benefits and services they
have earned – and to do so by adhering to the highest standards
of compassion, commitment, excellence, professionalism,
integrity, accountability, and stewardship.



SECRETARY'S STATEMENT




A lot has changed since Congress created the Veterans Administration in 1930. While the mission of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has evolved over the decades, our fundamental mandate remains the same: to provide competent, compassionate, and consistent high-quality health care, benefits, and memorial services for our country's veterans. The *VA Strategic Plan for FY 2006-*

2011 reflects our commitment to fulfill our mandate and to improve the lives of veterans and their families, in accordance with law. This ***VA Strategic Plan for Employees*** provides an abbreviated version of VA's strategic and enabling goals, the objectives, and some of the important, representative performance measures and targets. These are intended to provide a *line-of-sight* for all VA employees to see how what they do every day contributes to the strategic goals and to VA's mission.

Over the past several years, our Nation has once again been reminded of the vital importance of its armed forces, both active and reserves, and the life-altering risks inherent to individuals serving in our military. The *Global War on Terrorism* has dramatically altered how we think about homeland security and our inherent freedom.

It is my vision that we will continue our steadfast commitment to deliver high-quality and accessible health care. We will continue to provide timely and consistent delivery of benefits to eligible veterans and their families. With grateful hearts, we will memorialize veterans with dignity and preserve national cemeteries as shrines. VA must ensure a seamless transition for wartime veterans, moving from uniform to civilian life, and the principal



mechanism to achieve this is more effective collaboration between the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs. As we continue our efforts to meet these goals, we will also strive to achieve a *Gold Standard* for data management and security - to protect the privacy of all of America's veterans.

Within the context of this strategic plan, my priorities as Secretary are:

- **Maintain Status as Highest-Rated Health Care Provider in the U.S.;**
- **Provide Timely and Accurate Benefits to Veterans and Their Families;**
- **Memorialize Veterans with Final Resting Places in National Shrines;**
- **Achieve Seamless Transition for Wartime Servicemembers, Veterans, and Their Families; and**
- **Achieve the Highest Levels – the Gold Standard – for Data Security and Stewardship for Veterans and Their Families.**

The Department of Veterans Affairs is proud and privileged to be the keeper of America's long-standing promise to veterans. All of us are here to serve, because while wars have beginnings and ends, caring for those who served our Nation never ends.



R. James Nicholson
Secretary of Veterans Affairs

WHO WE SERVE

Veteran Population by Period of Service

| | |
|--------------|-----------|
| Peacetime | 6,142,000 |
| World War II | 3,151,000 |
| Korea | 3,086,000 |
| Vietnam | 7,956,000 |
| Gulf War | 4,647,000 |

Produced by Office of Policy and Planning (008). Source: Veteran Population as of 9/30/06.

Veteran Demographics

| | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Projected U.S. Veterans Population | 23,977,000 |
| Male (92.8%) | 22,246,000 |
| Female (7.2%) | 1,731,000 |
| Projected Number of Living WW II Veterans (as of 9/30/06) | 3,151,000 |
| Projected Number of WW II Veterans Who Pass Away Per Day | 1,025 |
| Percentage of Veteran Population 65 or Older | 38.4% |
| Veteran Population by Race: | Non-Hispanic: White 80.3% |
| | Black 10.7% |
| | Hispanic 5.5% |
| | Asian 1.2% |
| | American Indian 0.8% |
| | Pacific Islander 0.1% |
| | Other or multiple race 1.4% |

Produced by Office of Policy and Planning (008). Source: Veteran Population as of 9/30/06.

HOW WE SERVE

VA Benefits and Health Care Utilization

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| Number of Veterans Receiving VA Disability Compensation (as of 6/30/07) | 2.8M |
| Number of Veterans Rated 100% Disabled (as of 6/30/07) | 246,520 |
| Number of Veterans Receiving VA Pension (as of 6/30/07) | 323,771 |
| Number of Spouses Receiving DIC (as of 6/30/07) | 316,012 |
| Number of Total Enrollees in VA Health Care System (FY06) | 7.9M ¹ |
| Number of Total Unique Patients Treated (FY06) | 5.5M ¹ |
| Number of VA Education Beneficiaries (FY06) | 498,123 |
| Number of VA Veteran Life Insurance Beneficiaries (as of 9/30/06) | 1.8M |
| Number of VA Voc Rehab (Chapter 31) Trainees (as of FY06) | 53,431 |
| Number of Home Loans Guaranteed by VA (cumulative as of 6/30/07) | 2.2M |
| Number of Health Care Professionals Rotating through VA (FY06) | 100,893 |

Source: DVA Information Technology Center; Health Services Training Report; VBA Education Service; ¹VHA (10A5).

WHO WE ARE

About VA

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| Number of VA Employees | 247,585 |
| Number of VA Medical Centers | 153 |
| Number of VA Outpatient Clinics | 718 |
| Number of VA Vet Centers | 207 |
| Number of VBA Regional Offices | 57 |
| Number of National Cemeteries | 125 |

Appropriations

FY06 (actual)¹

| | |
|----------|----------------------|
| VA: | \$73.6B |
| VHA: | \$31.0B ² |
| VBA-GOE: | \$1.08B |
| NCA: | \$150 M ³ |

FY07 (enacted)¹

| | |
|----------|----------------------|
| VA: | \$80.2B |
| VHA: | \$34.5B ² |
| VBA-GOE: | \$1.17B |
| NCA: | \$161 M ³ |

FY08 (request)¹

| | |
|----------|----------------------|
| VA: | \$86.4B |
| VHA: | \$36.6B ² |
| VBA-GOE: | \$1.20B |
| NCA: | \$167 M ³ |

Produced by Office of Policy and Planning (008). Source: VA Employee Pay Status Count 6/30/07; Veterans Affairs Site Tracking (VAST) 5/11/07; NCA as of 6/30/07; Office of Budget; ¹Includes MCCF; ²Medical Care with MCCF; ³Operation and Maintenance Only.

VA STRATEGIC &



ENABLING GOALS

The following sections of the strategic plan present VA's four strategic goals and its enabling goal. These goals are crosscutting in nature and are intended to reflect the combined effort of all organizational elements to deliver important outcomes to disabled veterans, veterans in transition from active service, the overall veteran population and their families, and the Nation at-large. Each goal has a number of associated objectives that define intended outcomes that will result from the implementation of VA's major programs and management functions.

Goal 1 – Restore the capability of veterans with disabilities to the greatest extent possible, and improve the quality of their lives and that of their families.

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

Goal 3 – Honor and serve veterans in life, and memorialize them in death for their sacrifices on behalf of the Nation.

Goal 4 – Contribute to the public health, emergency management, socioeconomic well-being, and history of the Nation.

Enabling Goal – Deliver world-class service to veterans and their families through effective communication and management of people, technology, business processes, and financial resources.

Restore the capability of veterans with disabilities to the greatest extent possible, and improve the quality of their lives and that of their families.

Objective 1.1

Maximize the physical, mental, and social functioning of veterans with disabilities and be a leader in providing specialized health care services.

Objective 1.2

Provide timely and accurate decisions on disability compensation claims to improve the economic status and quality of life of service-disabled veterans.

Objective 1.3

Provide eligible service-connected disabled veterans with the opportunity to become employable and obtain and maintain employment, while delivering special support to veterans with serious employment handicaps.

Objective 1.4

Improve the standard of living and income status of eligible survivors of servicemembers and service-disabled veterans through compensation, education, and insurance benefits.

VA has worked to ensure that education benefits keep pace with the rising cost of a college education. From October 2001 through October 2006, the full-time MGIB monthly rate was increased by almost 63 percent to \$1,075 per month per veteran.

– VBA

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.

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.

The VA is a Bright Star in the Health Care Profession

– Journal of the American Medical Association
May 2005

Traumatic Injury Protection under SGLI (TSGLI) pays up to \$100,000 to servicemembers who incur a severe traumatic injury. TSGLI was designed to provide severely injured servicemembers with monetary assistance as quickly as possible after injury to help the member and the member's family defray expenses through an often long and arduous treatment and rehabilitation period.

The TSGLI program has been successful in meeting its intended purpose. As of May 4, 2007, TSGLI benefits totaling \$203.3 million have been paid to 3,170 servicemembers and veterans. The average payment is \$64,139.

– VBA

Honor and serve veterans in life and memorialize them in death for their sacrifices on behalf of the Nation.

Objective 3.1

Provide high-quality, reliable, accessible, timely, and efficient health care that maximizes the health and functional status of enrolled veterans, with special focus on veterans with service-connected conditions, those unable to defray the costs, and those statutorily eligible for care.

Objective 3.2

Provide eligible veterans and their survivors a level of income that raises their standard of living and sense of dignity by processing pension claims in a timely and accurate manner.

Objective 3.3

Maintain a high level of service to insurance policyholders and their beneficiaries to enhance the financial security of veterans' and servicemembers' families.

Objective 3.4

Ensure that the burial needs of veterans and eligible family members are met.

Objective 3.5

Provide veterans and their families with timely and accurate symbolic expressions of remembrance.

Objective 3.6

Improve the ability of veterans to purchase and retain a home by meeting or exceeding lending industry standards for quality, timeliness, and foreclosure avoidance.

Contribute to the public health, emergency management, socioeconomic well-being, and history of the Nation.

Objective 4.1

Improve the Nation's preparedness for response to war, terrorism, national emergencies, and natural disasters by developing plans and taking actions to ensure continued service to veterans, as well as to support national, state, and local emergency management and homeland security efforts.

Objective 4.2

Advance VA medical research and develop programs that address veterans' needs – with an emphasis on service-connected injuries and illnesses – and contribute to the Nation's knowledge of disease and disability.

Objective 4.3

Enhance the quality of care to veterans and provide high-quality educational experiences for health profession trainees, created internally in VA and via partnerships with the academic community.

Objective 4.4

Enhance the socioeconomic well-being of veterans, and thereby the Nation and local communities, through veterans benefits; assistance programs for small, disadvantaged, and veteran-owned businesses; and other community initiatives.

Objective 4.5

Ensure that national cemeteries are maintained as shrines dedicated to preserving our Nation's history, nurturing patriotism, and honoring the service and sacrifice veterans have made.

Deliver world-class service to veterans and their families through effective communication and management of people, technology, business processes, and financial resources.

Objective E-1

Recruit, develop, and retain a competent, committed, and diverse workforce that provides high-quality service to veterans and their families.

Objective E-2

Improve communication with veterans, employees, and stakeholders about VA's mission, goals, and current performance, as well as benefits and services that the Department provides.

Objective E-3

Implement a One-VA information technology framework that enables the consolidation of IT solutions and the creation of cross-cutting common services to support the integration of information across business lines and provides secure, consistent, reliable, and accurate information to all interested parties.

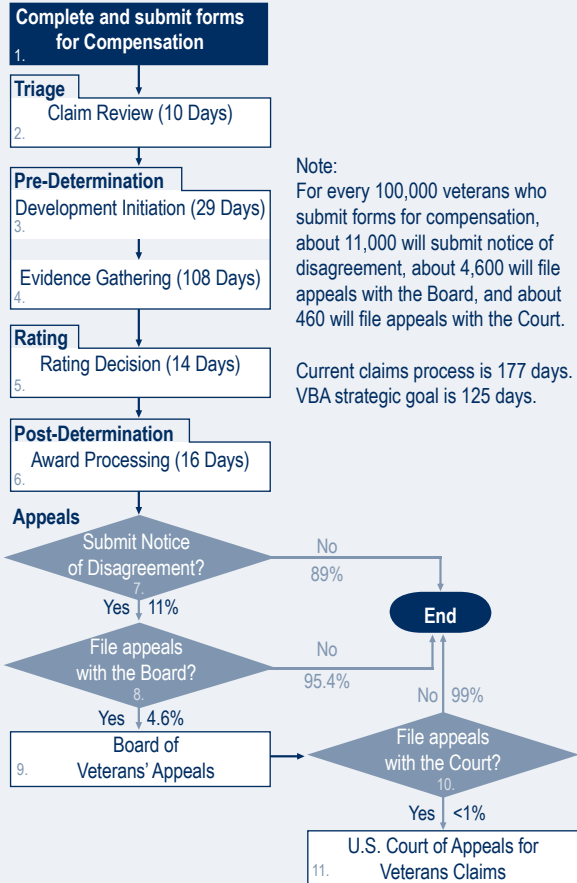
Objective E-4

Improve the overall governance and performance of VA by applying sound business principles; ensuring accountability; employing resources effectively through enhanced capital asset management, acquisition practices, and competitive sourcing; and linking strategic planning to budgeting and performance.

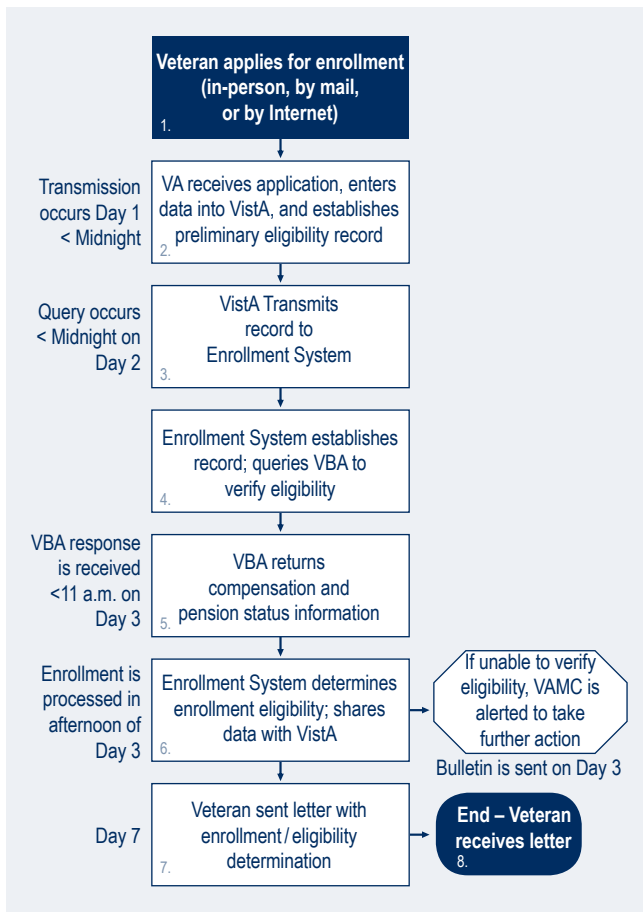
Note: For more detailed information regarding the *VA Strategic Plan for FY 2006-2011*, please use the following URL: <http://www1.va.gov/op3>.

| REPRESENTATIVE PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND TARGETS | | FY 2006 | TARGETS FY 2011 |
|--|--|----------|--------------------|
| 1.2 | Rating-related compensation actions – average days pending | 150 days | 100 days |
| 1.3 | Percent of veterans exiting the VR&E program who obtain and maintain suitable employment or achieve their independent living goals | 69% | 80% |
| 2.2 | Average days to complete original education claims | 27 days | 10 days |
| 3.1 | Percent of patients who report being seen within 20 minutes of scheduled appointments at VA health care facilities | 69% | 90% |
| 3.2 | Compensation & Pension rating-related actions – average days to process | 185 days | 125 days |
| 3.3 | Percent of servicemembers covered by Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) | 98% | 98% |
| 3.4 | Percent of veterans served by a burial option in a national or state veterans cemetery within a reasonable distance (75 miles) of their residence | 81.6% | 90% |
| 3.5 | Percent of graves in national cemeteries marked within 60 days of interment | 90% | 92% |
| E-1 | Percent of VA employees who respond favorably when surveyed about their job satisfaction | 71% | 76% |
| E-2 | Percent of press releases related to VA/DoD collaboration that are jointly or concurrently developed by the appropriate VA and DoD Offices of Public Affairs | 80% | 90% |
| E-3 | Reduction in the number of adverse drug events due to increased reliance on IT investments | 4,600 | 2,760 |

VA DISABILITY CLAIMS AND APPEALS PROCESS



VA HEALTH ENROLLMENT PROCESS



RECENT QUOTES ABOUT VA PROGRAMS

Today's VA Hospitals are Models of Top – Notch Care

– U.S. News and World Report
July 2005

WASHINGTON, DC — The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) model system of electronic health records, developed with extensive involvement of front-line health-care providers, has won a prestigious Innovations in American Government Award. The Award, a \$100,000 grant, is sponsored by the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and is administered in partnership with the Council for Excellence in Government.

"This award tells the American people what millions of veterans and their families have known for years – that VA provides world class health care in a professional, compassionate and high-tech environment," said Veterans Affairs Secretary R. James Nicholson. "It's an honor for VA to receive this very prestigious recognition and I salute the VA caregivers who made this award possible."

John F. Kennedy School of
Government, Harvard University
Council of Excellence in Government

VA has developed 5 new national cemeteries since 2005 and is currently developing 6 more new national cemeteries due to begin serving veterans by 2009. These 11 new cemeteries represent the largest expansion of the national cemetery system since the Civil War and will contribute heavily to achieving VA's strategic goal of serving 90% of U.S. veterans with a burial option within a reasonable distance of their residence.

– NCA

VA's rating of 95 for national cemeteries out of a possible 100 points on the 2004 American Customer Satisfaction Index is the highest rating ever achieved by a public or private organization in a nationwide customer satisfaction survey.

– University of Michigan



GOLD STANDARD FOR DATA SECURITY

The **Gold Standard for Data Security** is being implemented throughout the Department of Veterans Affairs to reduce the risk of compromising sensitive veteran and employee data to an absolute minimum. In the near future, the Department will be recognized as the best-in-class benchmark for data management and security in the federal government.

The underlying premise of a *Gold Standard* is that an organization delivers a service or product that exceeds how others in the same industry are performing. Within the context of how information is managed, the term – *Gold Standard for Data Security* – reflects the Department's commitment to robust and demanding standards of performance. The *Gold Standard for Data Security* prescribes strict adherence to proper stewardship and securing of data by VA employees and others using sensitive VA information.

VA organizations have been tasked by the Secretary to make the Gold Standard a reality and the principles of the *Gold Standard for Data Security* have permeated throughout the organization. There is executive-level commitment throughout the Department with a focus on the oversight and stewardship of data privacy strategies, and efforts are underway to educate VA's approximately 240,000-employee workforce about data security.

The key elements of the *Gold Standard for Data Security* include, but are not limited to, the promulgation of policies and procedures; IT strategic planning; training and education (for VA and Non-VA personnel); security measures and monitoring (including proactive auditing and compliance inspection); securing of devices; encryption of data; enhanced data security for VA's sensitive information; enhanced protection for shared data in interconnected systems; and incident management and monitoring. Collectively, the elements of the *Gold Standard for Data Security* form the basis of a comprehensive and consistent system-wide approach to data management, as encompassed by the *Data Security - Assessment and Strengthening of Controls (DS-ASC) Program*.

VA has committed time and resources to implement strategies that promote data security for all employees, and a change in the culture and capability in VA facilities and remote locations. As different aspects of the Gold Standard mature, VA's strategies and performance will evolve. VA has achieved substantial progress in a relatively short timeframe, and continuous improvement is expected. VA employees are now more cognizant about data management and security when they deliver services to veterans and their eligible family members. The growing awareness and change in the organization's culture will lead the Department to be recognized as the **Gold Standard for Data Security**.



CORE VALUES

Compassion – We will treat all veterans and their families with the utmost dignity and compassion. We will provide services in a caring manner, with a sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it.

Commitment – Veterans have earned our gratitude and respect. Their health care, benefits, and memorial service needs drive our actions.

Excellence – We strive to exceed the expectations of veterans and their families. We strive to perform at the highest level of competence and take pride in our accomplishments.

Professionalism – Our success depends on maintaining a highly-skilled, diverse, and compassionate workforce. We foster a culture that values equal opportunity, innovation, and accountability.

Integrity – We recognize the importance of accurate information. We practice open, truthful, and timely communication with veterans, employees, and external stakeholders. By carefully listening and responding to their concerns, we seek continuous improvement in our programs and services.

Accountability – We will perform in a manner at all times that makes us accountable, responsible, and answerable to veterans and their families, our leaders and other employees, as well as external stakeholders.

Stewardship – We will ensure responsible stewardship of the human, financial, and natural resources as well as data and information entrusted to us. We will improve performance through the use of innovative technologies, evidence-based medical practices, and sound business principles.

For questions or additional information, contact
strategicplan@va.gov