How to Request Special User Access

Special users must request access to VHA's information sources through HIA.

For information about special user access, please visit one of the following sites:

VHA EHRs through CAPRI or VistAWeb:

Please visit the HIA website at http://vaww.Information Access and Privacy.va.gov/hia

DUAs/DTAs, please contact the VHA Health Information Access program at hia@va.gov or call John Sacco at 202.641.5044.

Local access to VHA EHRs, please contact the Health Information Management (HIM) or Information Resources Management (IRM) staff at your facility.

Business Associate Agreements and other Information Access and Privacy topics, visit the VA Information Access and Privacy Office site at http://vaww.Information AccessandPrivacy.va.gov.

Veterans Health Administration

Veterans Health Administration

Office of Information
Health Data and Informatics
Information Access & Privacy Office

Health Information Access Program

*Protecting the confidentiality
of veterans' information
is everyone's responsibility*

Health Information Access Program

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Health Information Access (HIA) program is responsible for coordinating access to many of VHA's health information resources. These include national databases, extracted datasets, and electronic health records (EHRs)—including medical record data found in the Computerized Patient Record System (CPRS).

The goal of HIA is to provide those who serve veterans access to the informational resources they need, while always maintaining the privacy and security of veterans' health information. This is done in accordance with VA Policy and Federal law, including the Privacy Act of 1974 and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

For most users, access to VHA health information is coordinated by VA Medical Centers and other local VHA sites. VHA sites are authorized to grant access to VHA EHRs and local health information resources based on a user's official duties. However, **VHA sites may not grant local users unlimited, national access to EHR, except in emergency situations.** Instead, local users may only be granted access to the records of patients seen at that site. For some users, broader access such as **Special User Access**, may be required on a temporary or long-term basis.

Special User Access

VHA uses the phrase **"special user"** to refer to **an individual whose official duties require broader access to VHA EHRs,** such as access to records of patients within a particular region or at all VA facilities. HIA special users are grouped into four categories:

1. **Internal Users:** Employees and contractors within VA requiring access in the performance of their official duties under the **treatment, payment, health care operations, or research** provisions of HIPAA. This group includes clinicians who require access to EHRs beyond their own facilities, and users supporting national programs or peer reviews (e.g., Office of General Counsel (OGC), Office of the Inspector General (OIG)).
2. **External Users:** Users at other federal agencies (e.g., Department of Defense (DoD)) and accrediting bodies (e.g., Joint Commission) who require access for specific short-term audits and reviews.
3. **Researchers:** Users, both internal and external to VA, requiring access to **conduct research under a VA-approved research protocol** which has undergone review and approval by the Office of Research and Development (ORD) and the VHA Privacy Officer.
4. **Veterans Service Organizations (VSO): Accredited members of nationally-recognized Veteran Service Organizations** who have been granted Power of Attorney by veterans so that they can help those veterans prepare claims for VA benefits. A pilot for VSO access will begin in 2008

Data Transfer and Data Use Agreements

A special user may require a limited data set, as opposed to access to the entire EHR. In these instances, a Data Transfer Agreement (DTA) or a Data Use Agreement (DUA) is put into place between the VHA data owner and the data user. A DUA is used for internal VA transfers and a DTA is used for transfers to an outside entity. These agreements describe the nature of the project, the data being transferred, and the details of how the data will be transferred, stored, retrieved, retained, secured and destroyed. HIA can assist the user in establishing a DUA or DTA when one is required.
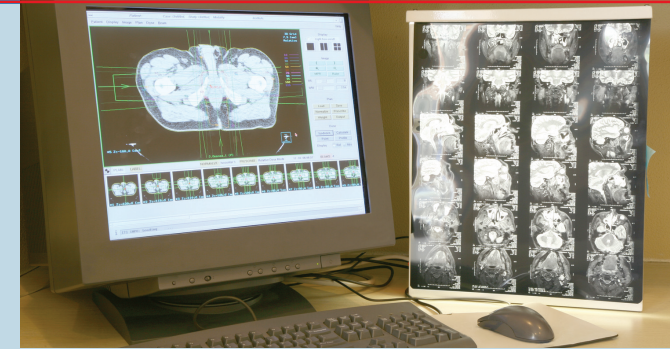
CAPRI and VistAWeb Access

VHA's EHR, including VistA® and the CPRS interface, is used by clinicians and other authorized staff members at over 1,300 sites of care. For these users, access to EHR information is managed by individual VA Medical Centers (VAMCs).

Although the information in VistA®/CPRS is used primarily for direct patient care, it is also valuable for clinical research, quality reviews, claims adjudication, and other health-related activities. Potential users include VA researchers, external peer reviews, Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) claims adjudicators, VSOs, and DoD case managers. VA has created three applications to allow read-only access to the information in VistA/CPRS: •CPRS Read Only, •CAPRI, •VistAWeb.

Access to **CPRS Read Only** is coordinated by individual VAMCs, according to local policy. **Special user access to CAPRI and VistAWeb is coordinated by HIA at a national level. CAPRI** is an acronym for Compensation & Pension Records Interchange. The CAPRI application is used at all VAMCs and VA Regional Offices (VAROs). CAPRI enables VHA to incorporate the results of Compensation and Pension (C&P) exams into a veteran's health record so that those results are accessible to VBA. **CAPRI also provides read-only access to CPRS data via a single access/verify code pair.** This makes it appealing to a wide-variety of users who access EHR data at multiple sites but prefer not to have a separate access/verify code on each site. **VistAWeb** is an intranet web application which duplicates the behavior of CPRS and its Remote Data View (RDV) function through a read-only web interface.