VIReC

Resource Center

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Executive Summary for Fiscal Year 2011

The mission of the VA Information Resource Center (VIReC) is to improve the quality of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) research that uses databases and information systems.

VIReC's strategic goals are:

Goal 1: Data Knowledge and Research Utility: Create a growing knowledge base of factual and evaluative information about VA and select non-VA data for VA researchers.

Goal 2: Data Knowledge Sharing: Effectively sharing knowledge about databases and information systems with researchers.

Goal 3: Liaison and Development: Represent the interests of VA researchers using data, databases, and information systems.

Through our Data Knowledge efforts, VIReC develops summary information, technical reports, and data quality updates about specific databases and information systems most relevant to health services research. VIReC focuses on developing and disseminating knowledge on new data systems and information systems, quality and utility of data, data documentation, and good data practices. Our customer service portal serves as a primary entry point for researchers and operations staff seeking information about databases and information system and also serves as a referral center. VIReC Liaison and Development efforts aim to stay abreast of the organizational context in which researchers use data and information systems and address informational gaps that exist among researchers. VIReC organizes activities around three strategic goals and two support functions: Operations Support and Technical Support. Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 began VIReC's twelfth year since its initial funding began in FY1999.

* Three particularly significant VIReC accomplishments in FY2011 were:

1. Publication and Dissemination of Important Data Knowledge Products Through Website and Promotion Activities

VIReC assisted researchers in identifying and accessing data for research, notably two reports on data quality issues, Historical Variable information to support longitudinal studies, and tutorials on using the Austin Information Technology Center (AITC).

2. Publication of a Single-Topic Issue Focusing on Data Quality Issues in Research on Veterans in the Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Development (JRRD)

This single topic issue included 13 peer reviewed manuscripts from across VA Health Services Research & Development (HSR&D) programs. Three of the articles have been cited by VA and non-VA researchers in subsequent peer-reviewed publications. The issue has been widely viewed and downloaded in both

Portable Document Files (PDF) and Hyper Text Mark-Up Language (HTML) format on the JRRD website. In FY2011 PDFs of the single topic issue were downloaded over 5,300 times and viewed over 8,400 times and articles in the issues were viewed as HTML 57,000 times.

3. Collaboration with VA Informatics and Computing Infrastructure (VINCI) to Assist Researchers in Understanding and Using VINCI Resources for Secure and Efficient Computing

Notably, we piloted two research projects using VA/CMS data on the VINCI platform. This progress toward developing a secure and efficient computing environment for approved VA research projects will significantly impact data security for these highly sensitive data.