

**Question for the Record**  
**Honorable Steve Buyer**  
**Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations**  
**House Committee on Veterans Affairs**  
**March 17, 2004**

**Hearing on the VA's IT Programs**

**Question:** At the hearing, reference was made to a Joint Strategic Plan that addresses information sharing between the two agencies, a plan that should lead to seamless medical records transfer. How do your agency's GPRA Strategic and Performance Plans link to this Joint Strategic Plan and how does that linkage devolve through the directly linked subordinate strategic and performance plans in your agency?

**Response:** The VA/DoD Joint Executive Council (JEC), with the purpose of documenting a strategic plan to guide collaboration between the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Defense, wrote the Joint Strategic Plan (JSP). The JSP contains Goal 4, *Integrated Information Sharing - Enable the efficient sharing of beneficiary data, medical records, and other information, through secure and interoperable information management systems*. JSP Goal 4 provides the framework by which VA and DoD will implement the activities associated with development of interoperable health records. VA's GPRA Plan (the VA Strategic Plan) contains multiple provisions in which the mandate to develop interoperable records is expressed and measured.

VA Strategic Plan, identifies use of interoperable health records as a performance measure to assess performance of VA's Strategic Goal Two, *Ensure a smooth transition from active military service to civilian life, which includes objective 2.1, Ease the reentry of new veterans into civilian life, by increasing awareness of and access to and use of VA health care, benefits, and services*.

- VA's performance goal 2.1 for FY2004 is to ensure that 90% of VA medical centers provide electronic access to DoD health information on separated service members; and
- VA's performance goal 2.1 for FY2008 is to ensure that 100% of the medical centers provide electronic access to DoD data).

VA Strategic Plan Goal Three, to *Honor and serve veterans in life and memorialize them in death for their sacrifices on behalf of the nation*, includes the following crosscutting strategy: "VA will continue its partnership with DoD to develop an interoperable VA/DoD medical information system and ensure the availability of veterans' active duty health records to VA care providers."

VA Strategic Plan Enabling Goal E.3, *Deliver world-class service to veterans and their families by applying sound business principles that result in effective management of people, communications, technology, and governance*, includes a section on collaboration with DoD: "VA and DoD will develop an interoperable information technology framework and architecture that will enable the efficient, effective, and secure interchange of records and information to support the delivery of benefits and services."

The entire VA Strategic Plan document can be located at this URL:

<http://www.va.gov/opp/organizations/planning.htm>

In addition to the VA Strategic Plan, leadership within VA and DoD have further committed to implementing JSP goal 4 by creating an implementation plan that will guide the specific tasks and activities necessary to lead to interoperable health records. This implementation plan, the Joint Electronic Health Records Plan, which was signed by the VA Under Secretary for Health and the DoD Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, contains a strategy to ensure that interoperable data repositories are developed, jointly-adopted standards are implemented into health systems, and interoperable health software applications are developed or acquired by the agencies. This Plan is jointly managed at the executive and project levels within each agency.