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2003 Departmental Performance Plan

With the 2003 Performance Plan, we continue our efforts to raise the level of confidence of America's veterans in the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) ability to improve the timeliness and accuracy of claims processing, to expand access to high quality health care, to meet the burial needs of veterans, and to maintain national cemeteries as shrines.

This plan describes how we will achieve our strategic goals, objectives, and performance goals with the funds we request in the 2003 Budget. Along with the budget submissions covering each VA program, this plan provides information to Congress, veterans service organizations, and the general public concerning not only what we do, but more importantly, how we intend to meet our commitments to the Nation's veterans and their families.

Executive Summary

By the end of 2003, the Department will have made significant strides toward achieving our long-term strategic goals, objectives, and performance targets. This plan describes how we will do it.

The Performance Plan contains several sections. We describe the improvements to our performance planning efforts, particularly our increased focus on key priorities established by the Secretary. After summarizing the Department's mission, vision, and program descriptions, we present detailed information on the goals, objectives, and performance measures identified as critical to the success of the Department by VA's senior leadership. The Performance Plan also contains discussions of:

- the means and strategies that will be used to achieve our performance targets;
- external factors that may have an impact on our ability to achieve those targets;
- major management challenges;
- data verification and validation activities;
- crosscutting activities VA has ongoing with other government and private sector organizations;
- program evaluation efforts;
- budget account restructuring activities;
- efforts that are in place to enhance accountability for performance;

- efforts we are taking in support of the President's management agenda;
- steps we will take to make sure this plan is communicated to VA staff and to our external stakeholders.

Finally, we present two sets of data tables. The first displays all of our performance measures by Departmental goal and objective; the second displays the measures by program.

Introduction

VA directly touches the lives of millions of veterans every day through its health care, benefits, and burial programs. The 2003 Performance Plan describes how VA will fulfill its obligations to provide high-quality service, to deliver benefits to veterans in a way that satisfies the American public's commitment to honor veterans' service, and to compensate them for their sacrifices.

The 2003 Performance Plan presents the performance targets VA is striving to achieve as a means of bringing us closer to accomplishing our strategic goals and objectives. This Plan supports the Secretary's priorities:

- Provide specialized health care services;
- Improve the quality and timeliness of claims processing;
- Focus vocational rehabilitation resources;
- Provide meaningful readjustment assistance;
- Meet community standards for home loan guaranty benefits;
- Provide high-quality health care;
- Provide timely access to health care;
- Refocus medical care on higher-priority veterans;
- Maintain high level of service to insurance policy holders;
- Ensure the burial needs of veterans and their eligible family members are met;
- Ensure graves in national cemeteries are marked in a timely manner;
- Focus medical research programs;
- Improve response in event of a National Emergency; and
- Maintain national cemeteries as shrines.

By the end of 2003, we will improve the timeliness of claims processing so we complete cases in an average of 100 days, while continuing to improve the quality of our decision-making. Veterans will be able to schedule primary care and specialty appointments at VA health care facilities within 30 days 89 percent of the time and 87 percent of the time, respectively, and waiting times for scheduled appointments will be less than 20 minutes 72 percent of the time. Over 76 percent of veterans will have reasonable access to a burial option at a national cemetery or state veterans cemetery. The overall appearance of national cemeteries will provide a dignified and respectful setting for deceased veterans and for those who visit these national shrines.

At VA, we will conduct our operations using sound business principles. The plan describes a number of performance enablers and management reforms, including the President's management agenda initiatives, which will allow us to achieve our goals while managing public resources with prudence.

This document provides a synopsis of the more detailed planning, performance, and resource information, presented in an integrated fashion throughout Volume 1 (Benefit Programs), Volume 2 (Medical Programs), and Volume 4 (General Operating Expenses) of our budget submission. Taken together, the Performance Plan and the individual budget volumes present a comprehensive picture of what VA is striving to achieve, how we propose to measure our progress, and the resources required to accomplish our strategic goals and objectives.

Participation in VA Programs

The Department carries out its responsibilities through the following programs:

Medical Care	Compensation	Housing
Medical Education	Pension	Insurance
Medical Research	Education	Burial
	Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment	

Projected Number of Veterans and Dependents Who Will Participate in VA Programs, 2003			
Program	Participants	Program	Participants
Medical Care:		Vocational Rehabilitation:	
Unique Patients	4,893,900	Veterans Receiving	
Veterans	4,460,700	Services/Subsistence	64,900
Non-Veterans	433,200		
Compensation:		Housing:	
Veterans	2,431,400	Loans Guaranteed	240,000
Survivors/Children	310,000		
Pension:		Insurance:	
Veterans	336,900	Administered	
Survivors	218,700	Policies (Veterans)	1,815,900
		Supervised Policies	
		(Service Members	
		and Veterans)	2,388,000
Education:		Burial:	
Veterans and		Interments	90,500
Servicepersons	331,900	Graves Maintained	2,573,300
Reservists	70,800	Headstones and	
Survivors/Dependents	48,400	Markers	341,200

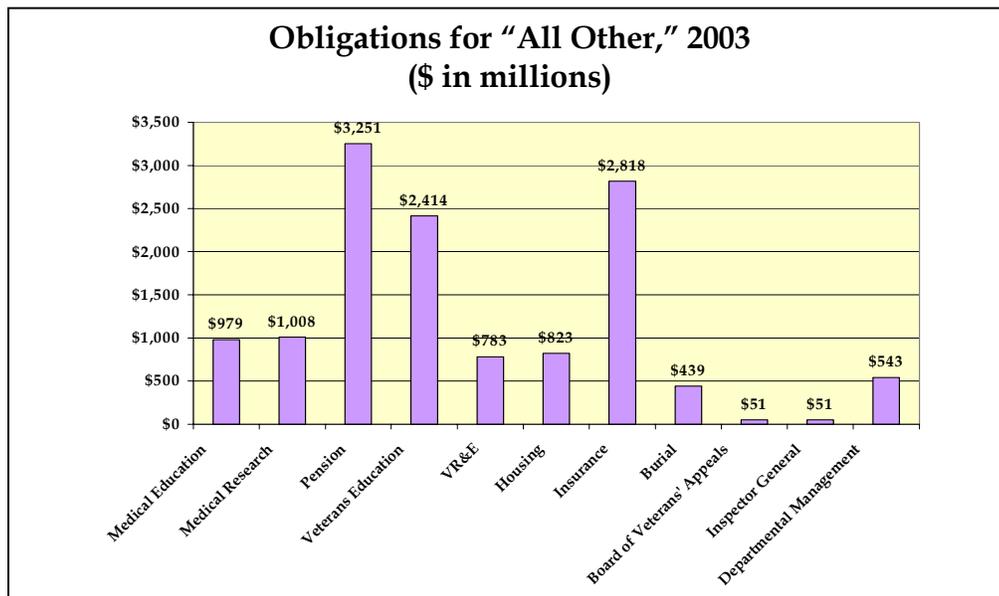
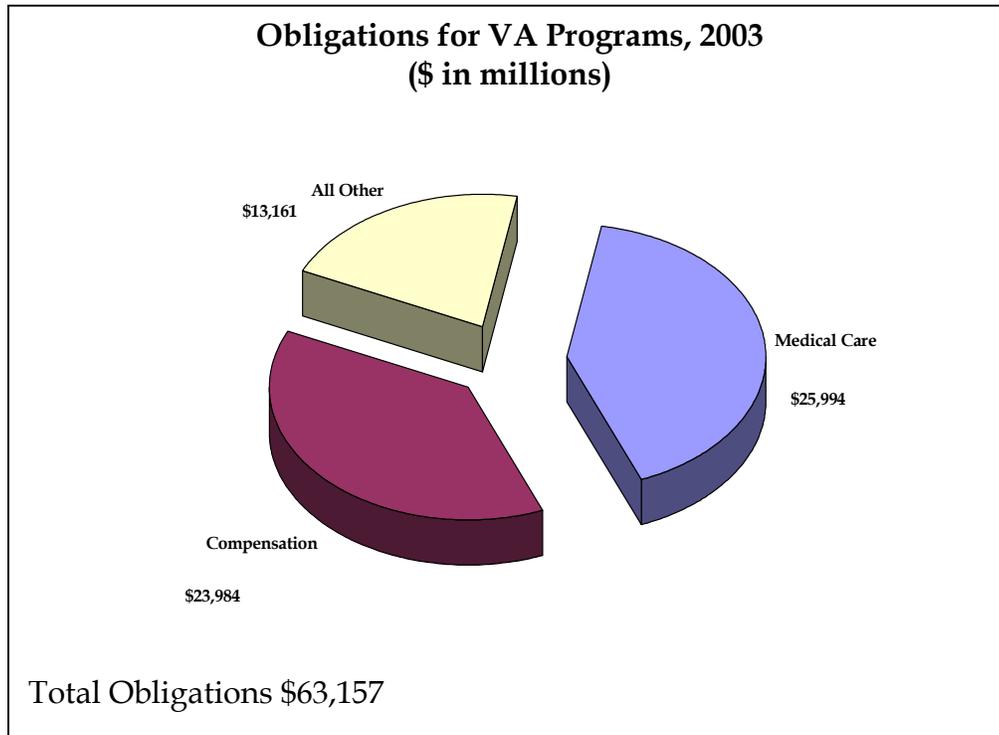
VA's Key Performance Goals for 2003

Performance Measure	1999 Actual	2000 Actual	2001 Actual	2002 Est.	2003 Plan	Strategic Target
Strategic Goal 1: Restore the capability of disabled veterans to the greatest extent possible and improve the quality of their lives and that of their families						
Proportion of discharges from SCI center bed sections to non-institutional settings	93%	97%	98%	95%	95%	95%
Compensation and pension rating-related actions - average days to process	166	173	181	208	165*	74
*The Secretary has set an intermediate goal of 100 days during the summer of 2003.						
National accuracy rate for core rating work	68%	59%	78%	85%	88	96%
Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Rehabilitation rate	53%	65%	65%	67%	68%	70%
Strategic Goal 2: Ensure a smooth transition for veterans from active military service to civilian life						
Montgomery GI Bill usage rate	56%	55%	56%	58%	61%	70%
Average days to complete:						
Original education claims	26	36	50	38	30	10
Supplemental education claims	16	22	24	21	17	7
Foreclosure avoidance through serving (FATS) ratio	38%	30%	40%	39%	40%	40%
Strategic Goal 3: Honor and serve veterans in life and memorialize them in death for their sacrifices on behalf of the Nation						
Chronic Disease Care Index II	N/A	N/A	77%	78%	79%	82%
Prevention Index II	N/A	N/A	80%	80%	80%	85%
Percent of patients rating VA health care service as very good or excellent:						
Inpatient	65%	66%	64%	66%	68%	72%
Outpatient	65%	64%	65%	67%	69%	72%
Percent of Veterans Service Standard (VSS) problems reported per patient (decrease is intended direction)						
Patient Education	31%	30%	30%	29%	29%	27%
Visit Coordination	16%	15%	16%	15%	15%	13%
Percent of primary care appointments scheduled within 30 days of desired date	N/A	N/A	87%	88%	89%*	90%
Percent of specialist appointments scheduled within 30 days of desired date	N/A	N/A	84%	85%	87%*	90%
Note: Data on the percent of patients who are able to schedule a non-urgent appointment with their primary care provider within 30 days, or with a specialist within 30 days, exclude new enrollees who are pending scheduling of their first appointment.						
Percent of patients who report being seen within 20 minutes of their scheduled appointment at VA health care facilities	N/A	N/A	63%	70%	72%	90%

Performance Measure	1999 Actual	2000 Actual	2001 Actual	2002 Est.	2003 Plan	Strategic Target
Bar Code Medication Administration (BCMA) contingency plan and conduct test of plans annually	N/A	N/A	N/A	100%	100%	100%
Balanced Scorecard: Quality-Access-Satisfaction-Cost	88%	90%	98%	101%	102%	100%
Average days to process insurance disbursements	3.2	3.2	2.8	3.2	3.2	3.0
Percent of veterans served by a burial option within a reasonable distance (75 miles) of their residence	67.0%	72.6%	72.6%	73.9%	76.2%	85.0%
Percent of respondents who rate the quality of service provided by the national cemeteries as excellent	84%	88%	92%	93%	96%	100%
Percent of graves in national cemeteries marked within 60 days of interment	N/A	N/A	N/A	Baseline	TBD	TBD
Strategic Goal 4: Contribute to the public health, emergency preparedness, socioeconomic well being and history of the Nation						
Institutional Review Board compliance with National Committee for Quality Assurance accreditation and maintenance, as appropriate, of AAALAC or NRC accreditation or certification	N/A	N/A	0%	10%	40%	100%
Percent of respondents who rate national cemetery appearance as excellent	79%	82%	96%	96%	98%	100%

FY 2003 Obligations

During 2003, VA obligations are projected to total over \$63 billion for these programs. Approximately 95 percent of this sum will go directly to veterans in the form of monthly payments of benefits or for direct services, such as medical care.



Improvements to the Strategic Plan and the Performance Plan

VA employees are deeply committed to providing high-quality benefits and services to veterans as a unified Department, and to having the most positive impact on the lives of our Nation's veterans. From the time they leave active military service, veterans may have a variety of social, medical, and economic needs that are met through VA programs. Acting as an integrated Department, we can best assure those needs are met through effective strategic and performance planning. We continually consult with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Congress, and other stakeholders for their suggestions on improving our strategic and performance plans. In September 2000, we published a new Strategic Plan centered on three veteran-focused strategic goals, one strategic goal focused on support of national policy, and an enabling goal. The Performance Plan builds on the Strategic Plan by supporting the resource request necessary to achieve our long-term and short-term goals. This year's Performance Plan incorporates our stakeholders' suggestions. The discussion below describes the significant changes we are making to these documents to make them more useful to a wider audience.

Strategic Plan Improvements

- VA will revise and publish our strategic plan in the spring of 2002 to reflect the vision and priorities of the new VA leadership. Significant changes to the goals are not expected, but some priorities could change.
- The revised strategic plan will cover the period FY 2003 to FY 2008. The goals will continue to be overarching and define the results we expect to produce. The goals will remain veteran-focused and will represent the shared interest of the Department's organizations.

Strategic Management Improvements

VA has initiated a new governance process to provide a systematic approach for developing recommendations for the Secretary regarding policy, planning, and management issues that:

- Establishes a Strategic Management Council (SMC) chaired by the Deputy Secretary. The SMC membership includes the Deputy Under Secretaries, the General Counsel, the Assistant Secretaries, the Chair of the Board of Veterans' Appeals, the Chief of Staff, the Counselor to the Secretary, and the Senior Advisor to the Deputy Secretary. This council has responsibility for reviewing all major policy and management issues, assessing options, and making recommendations to the Secretary through the VA Executive Board.
- Establishes a VA Executive Board (VAEB) chaired by the Secretary to review and approve proposals for new or revised policies. The VAEB also reviews and approves the Department's Strategic Plan, Annual Performance Plan and Report, Accountability Report, and other major management documents

including the annual budget submissions, annual legislative program, capital investment proposals, and workforce plans.

- Beginning in 2002, the Deputy Secretary conducts monthly performance reviews with the Under Secretaries of each Administration and the Assistant Secretaries. The reviews focus on variance from plan for key performance measures, resource measures (financial and FTE), and workload indicators.

Performance Plan Improvements

- This year's Performance Plan is structured around strategic goals and priorities established by the Secretary. We incorporate interim objectives, pending publication of the strategic plan in the spring of 2002. Key performance measures are those that directly support one of the secretarial priorities. This improves the focus of the plan by putting attention on issues that are most important to veterans, Congress, and our stakeholders.
- We continue the presentation of resources by strategic goal and objective. This information represents a significant advancement in demonstrating the relationship between resources and results. As our accounting tools improve, this information will be more precise.
- We begin performance budgeting pilots to test concepts and methods for improving the linkage between resources and performance.

Performance Measurement

Each year, we evaluate performance for the previous year, and set new annual performance targets that demonstrate our commitment to continuous improvement. In many instances, the performance improvements we project from one year to the next, as well as the performance advancements we actually achieve, are dramatic. In other cases, the improvement is necessarily more limited. The degree of improvement is due to a variety of factors, such as the availability of resources for each program, the timing associated with implementing initiatives and new strategies, and the priorities established by the Department. Nevertheless, we continuously strive to improve our performance in all programs every year.

While the vast majority of our performance measures remain the same from one year to the next, our list of measures does change in response to changing circumstances.

First, we modify our strategic goals and objectives in connection with our ever-improving strategic management process. When these long-term goals and objectives change, we alter some of our performance goals and measures to ensure that they are consistent with the Strategic Plan. Second, we are constantly striving for better ways to measure performance. This is an ongoing process, and every year we will introduce new measures that reflect a more sophisticated and

mature performance measurement process. Third, there are instances in which our actual performance has met or exceeded our original goals, and further performance improvements are unlikely or unreasonable. In these cases, we either drop the performance measure, or replace it with a different one.

Mission, Vision, Core Values, and Program Descriptions

Since the earliest days of our country, support for veterans and their families has been a national concern. Beginning in 1636, when the Plymouth Colony passed a law to provide lifetime support for any soldier who returned from battle with an injury, we have responded to the needs of veterans. From this humble but necessary beginning, through all our wars, veterans' programs have evolved to the comprehensive set of health care, benefits, and services VA administers today. Veterans' programs have four broad purposes:

- to restore the capability of those who suffered harm during their service;
- to ensure a smooth transition as veterans return to civilian life in their communities;
- to honor and serve all veterans for the sacrifices they made on behalf of the Nation;
- to contribute to the public health, socioeconomic well being, and history of the Nation.

Just as the history of VA has been evolutionary in nature, we can expect that VA will continue to transform. Today, there are over 25 million living men and women who served in the armed forces. VA currently provides health care, benefits, and services to millions of veterans, as well as eligible survivors and dependents of veterans. As we move further into the new century, we know the needs of veterans and their families will continue to change.

Mission

"To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan."

These words, spoken by Abraham Lincoln during his Second Inaugural Address, reflect the philosophy and principles that guide VA in everything we do in our efforts to serve our Nation's veterans and their families.

In today's environment, President Lincoln's statement reflects VA's responsibility to treat America's veterans and their families with profound respect and compassion; to be their principal advocate in promoting the health, welfare, and dignity of all veterans; and to ensure they receive the medical care, benefits, social support, and lasting memorials they deserve in recognition of their service to America.

The statutory mission authority for VA defines our organizational commitment to America's veterans: "to administer the laws providing benefits and other services to veterans and the dependents and the beneficiaries of veterans." (38 U.S.C. 301(b)) VA exists to give meaning, purpose, and reality to that commitment. The needs, preferences, and expectations of veterans directly shape the benefits and services we provide.

Vision

As the needs of veterans change, VA must change to address those needs by:

- Becoming an even more veteran-focused organization, functioning as a single, comprehensive provider of seamless service to the men and women who have served our Nation;
- Continuously benchmarking and improving the quality and delivery of our service with the best in business, and using innovative means and high technology to deliver world-class service;
- Fostering partnerships with veterans organizations and other stakeholders, making them part of the decision-making process;
- Cultivating a dedicated VA workforce of highly skilled employees who understand, believe in, and take pride in our vitally important mission.

Core Values

To implement our mission and achieve our strategic goals, we strive to uphold a set of core values representing the basic fabric of our organizational culture. These values transcend all organizational boundaries and apply to everything we do as a Department. Each member of the VA team endeavors to practice the following values when serving veterans and working with others:

Respect and Commitment

- Veterans have earned our respect and our commitment to meet their needs.
- We believe that integrity, fairness, and respect must be the hallmarks of our interactions.

Open Communication

- We are committed to open, accurate, and timely communication with veterans, employees, and external stakeholders.
- We listen to the concerns and views of veterans, employees, and external stakeholders to improve the programs and services we provide.

Excellence in Services, Programs, and People

- We continuously strive to meet or exceed the service delivery expectations of veterans and their families by delivering accurate, timely, and courteous service and benefits in an effective and efficient manner.
- We are committed to improved access for veterans and their families through facility location and design, and through innovative uses of information technology.
- We perform at the highest level of competence and take pride in our accomplishments.
- We are open to change and value a culture where everyone is involved, accountable, respected, and appreciated.
- We value teamwork and cooperation—operating as *One VA* to deliver world-class, seamless service to veterans and their families.

Program Descriptions

VA directly touches the lives of millions of veterans every day through its health care, benefits, and burial programs. With facilities in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, the territories, and the District of Columbia, we provide benefits and services through our 172 medical centers, 137 nursing homes, 43 domiciliaries, 835 outpatient clinics, 206 Vietnam Veteran Outreach Centers (Vet Centers), 57 regional offices, and 120 national cemeteries.

The Department accomplishes its mission through partnerships among the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), the National Cemetery Administration (NCA), the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA), and the Departmental staff organizations by integrating the related activities and functions of the following major programs:

Medical Care

VA meets the health care needs of America's veterans by providing primary care, specialized care, and related medical and social support services.

Medical Education

VA's health care education and training programs help to ensure an adequate supply of clinical care providers for veterans and the Nation.

Medical Research

The medical research program contributes to the Nation's knowledge about disease and disability.

Compensation

The compensation program provides monthly payments and ancillary benefits to veterans, in accordance with rates specified by law, in recognition of the average potential loss of earning capacity caused by a disability, disease, or death incurred in, or aggravated during, active military service. This program also provides monthly payments, as specified by law, to surviving spouses, dependent children, and dependent parents, in recognition of the economic loss caused by the veteran's death during active military service or, subsequent to discharge from military service, as a result of a service-connected disability.

Pension

The pension program provides monthly payments, as specified by law, to needy wartime veterans who are permanently and totally disabled. This program also provides monthly payments, as specified by law, to needy surviving spouses and dependent children of deceased wartime veterans who die as a result of a disability not related to military service.

Education

The education program assists eligible veterans, service members, reservists, and survivors and dependents in achieving their educational or vocational goals.

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment

The vocational rehabilitation and employment program assists veterans with service-connected disabilities to achieve functional independence in daily activities. It provides the support and assistance necessary to enable service-disabled veterans to become employable, and to obtain and maintain suitable employment.

Housing

The housing program helps eligible veterans, active duty personnel, surviving spouses, and selected reservists to purchase and retain homes.

Insurance

The insurance program provides veterans and service members with life insurance benefits, some of which are not available from other providers like the commercial insurance industry, due to lost or impaired insurability resulting from military service. Insurance coverage will be available in reasonable amounts and at competitive premium rates and with policy features comparable to those offered by commercial companies. A competitive, secure rate of return will be ensured on investments held on behalf of the insured.

Burial

Primarily through the National Cemetery Administration, VA honors veterans with a final resting place and lasting memorials to commemorate their service to the Nation.

Resource Requirements by Strategic Goal

The following table shows the approximate cost (obligations) of achieving the Department's strategic goals, by program. Because we do not yet have sophisticated financial tools, we cannot precisely state the cost of each goal. The table is included in the 2003 Performance Plan to show the potential for capturing and presenting this information.

Program Account	Total Obligations (\$ in millions)	Restore Disabled Veterans	Assure a Smooth Transition	Honor and Serve Veterans	Support National Goals	Enabling Goal
Medical Care	\$25,995.2	\$12,970.0	\$83.1	\$12,879.0	\$63.0	
Medical Education	\$978.9	\$528.6			\$450.3	
Medical Research	\$1,008.0	\$216.2			\$791.8	
Compensation	\$24,002.1	\$24,002.1				
Pension	\$3,237.9			\$3,237.9		
Education	\$2,411.7	\$237.8	\$2,173.9			
Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment	\$783.0	\$783.0				
Housing	\$822.5		\$822.5			
Insurance	\$2,818.2			\$2,818.2		
Burial	\$439.2			\$359.8	\$79.4	
Departmental Management:						
Board of Veterans' Appeals	\$61.2	\$55.1		\$6.1		
Office of Inspector General	\$51.2					\$51.2
Staff Offices	\$558.2					\$558.2
Total (\$ in millions)	\$63,167.3	\$38,792.9	\$3,079.5	\$19,301.1	\$1,384.5	\$609.3
	100%	61%	5%	31%	2%	1%

Resource Requirements by Objective

The following table shows the approximate cost (obligations) of achieving the Department's interim objectives, by strategic goal. Because we do not yet have sophisticated financial tools, we cannot precisely state the cost of each objective. The table is included in the 2003 Performance Plan to show the potential for capturing this information.

Interim Objective	Total Obligations (\$ in millions)	Restore Disabled Veterans	Assure a Smooth Transition	Honor and Serve Veterans	Support National Goals	Enabling Goal
1.1 Maximize the physical, mental, and social functioning of disabled veterans, including special populations of veterans, and be recognized as a leader in the provision of these specialized services.	\$12,970.0	\$12,970.0				
1.2 Provide timely and accurate decisions on disability compensation claims, thereby improving the economic status and quality of life of service-disabled veterans.	\$20,057.8	\$20,057.8				
1.3 Enable service-disabled veterans, through vocational rehabilitation, to become employable, obtain and maintain suitable employment, and achieve independent living with special focus on seriously disabled veterans.	\$783.0	\$783.0				
1.4 Ensure eligible survivors of service-disabled veterans are able to maintain a minimum (adequate) standard of living and income through compensation, education, and insurance benefits.	\$4,237.2	\$4,237.2				
2.1 Ease the reentry of new veterans into civilian life by increasing awareness, access to, and use of benefits and services, including readjustment counseling.	\$83.1		\$83.1			
2.2 Provide timely and accurate decisions on education claims thereby enhancing veterans' and service-members' ability to achieve educational and career goals.	\$2,173.9		\$2,173.9			
2.3 Improve the ability of veterans to purchase and retain a home by meeting or exceeding lending industry standards for quality and timely service, while minimizing VA loss on foreclosed properties.	\$822.5		\$822.5			
3.1 Provide consistently reliable, accessible, timely and efficient high quality care through a health care system that maximizes functional status, improves veteran satisfaction, and fosters healthy communities.	\$12,879.0			\$12,879.0		
3.2 Provide timely and accurate processing of pension claims, thereby ensuring a level of income that brings eligible veterans and their survivors up to a standard of living that assures dignity in their lives.	\$3,244.0			\$3,244.0		
3.3 Maintain the high level of service to insurance policy holders and their beneficiaries, thereby enhancing the financial security for veterans' families.	\$2,818.2			\$2,818.2		
3.4 Ensure that the burial needs of veterans and eligible family members are met.	\$300.2			\$300.2		
3.5 Provide veterans and their families with timely and accurate symbolic expressions of remembrance.	\$59.6			\$59.6		

Resource Requirements by Objective

Interim Objective	Total Obligations (\$ in millions)	Restore Disabled Veterans	Assure a Smooth Transition	Honor and Serve Veterans	Support National Goals	Enabling Goal
4.1 Advance VA medical research and development programs that address veteran's needs, with an emphasis on service-connected injuries and illnesses, while contributing to the Nation's knowledge of disease and disability.	\$1,008.0	\$216.2			\$791.8	
4.2 Maintain sustained partnerships with the medical education community that maximize care to veterans and provide a high level of educational experience for health care providers.	\$978.9	\$528.6			\$450.3	
4.3 Improve the Nations response in the event of a national emergency or natural disaster by providing timely and effective contingency medical support and other services.	\$63.0				\$63.0	
4.4 Enhance the socioeconomic well-being of the Nation and local communities through veteran's benefits, business assistance programs, and other community initiatives.	<\$1.0					<\$1.0
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	\$79.4				\$79.4	
E.1 Improve communications with veterans, employees, and stakeholders about the Department's mission, goals, and current performance and of the benefits and services VA provides.	\$15.0					\$15.0
E.2 Recruit, develop, and retain a competent, committed and diverse workforce that provides high quality service to veterans and their families	\$54.6					\$54.6
E.3 Implement a <i>One VA</i> information technology framework that supports the integration of information across business lines and that provides a source of consistent, reliable, accurate, and secure information to veterans and their families, employees, and stakeholders	\$27.8					\$27.8
E.4 Improve the overall governance and performance of VA by applying sound business practices and ensuring accountability	\$512.0					\$512.0
Total (\$ in millions)	\$63,167.3	\$38,792.9	\$3,079.5	\$19,301.1	\$1,384.5	\$609.3

