

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

STRATEGIC PLAN  
FOR EMPLOYEES

---

2001 – 2006

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, DC 20420

MAY 2001

Support for veterans and their families has always been a national concern and priority. In 1626, the Plymouth Colony passed a law that provided lifetime support for any soldier who returned from battle with an injury. In 1789, the Continental Congress passed a national pension law for soldiers who fought in the American Revolution. President Lincoln signed legislation in 1862 which authorized national cemeteries. In 1865, the National Home for Volunteer Soldiers was established, and homes for disabled Civil War veterans were opened in several locations throughout the country.

In 1919, the United States Government Life Insurance program was established. In 1930, a major consolidation of veterans service functions occurred when President Hoover signed a bill which established the Veterans Administration, an independent Federal agency that incorporated the Veterans Bureau, Bureau of Pensions, and National Home for Volunteer Soldiers.

During World War II, the Nation's most far-reaching program for veterans was established with the passage of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, also known as "The GI Bill of Rights," which offered low interest loans to purchase homes, farms, or small businesses; unemployment benefits; financial assistance for education; and health care and rehabilitation services. Ultimately, in 1988, recognizing the need to coordinate the full range of services for our Nation's veterans, Congress established a new cabinet post creating the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

VA will continue to transform. Today, there are more than 25 million men and women who have served in the armed forces. VA currently provides health care and benefit services to millions of veterans as well as eligible survivors and dependents of veterans. The needs of today's veterans and their families will continue to change. While the future veteran population will most likely be smaller, veterans will live longer and may require additional health care and benefit services. As a Department, our vision for the future is:

*"As the Department of Veterans Affairs heads into the 21st Century, we will strive to meet the needs of the Nation's veterans and their families today and tomorrow. We will become 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. We will continuously benchmark the quality and delivery of our service with the best in business and use innovative means and high technology to deliver world-class service. We will foster partnerships with veterans and other stakeholders, making them part of the decision-making process. We will cultivate a dedicated VA work force of highly skilled employees who understand, believe in, and take pride in our vitally important mission."*

This document, our first formal VA Strategic Plan for Employees, communicates VA's mission, vision, core values, long-term goals and objectives, and our shared commitment to serving veterans and their families. For more detailed information regarding VA's long-term strategic direction, FY 2000 accomplishments and planned achievements for FY 2002, I encourage you to refer to VA's compendium of planning documents, including the Strategic Plan for FY 2001 - 2006, FY 2000 Annual Performance Report, and FY 2002 Annual Performance Plan.

I am sincerely honored and humbled to have been confirmed as the Secretary for Veterans Affairs. I believe deeply in our Department and am fully committed to our mission of service to veterans. We have the finest workforce in the Federal Government, and together we can make a profound difference in the lives of our Nation's veterans and their families by achieving the goals and objectives presented in this plan. I strongly encourage each and every employee to review this document and discuss it with your supervisor and peers. It is extremely important that each of us fully understands which goals and objectives our work directly supports and how our efforts affect the lives of veterans. You are encouraged to use this document to learn more about the full array of programs and functions that are carried out throughout VA.

  
Anthony J. Principi

Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs

## **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**

*VA will achieve this goal of restoring the capability of disabled veterans by maximizing the ability of disabled veterans, including special veteran populations, and their dependents and survivors to become full and productive members of society through a system of health care, compensation, vocational rehabilitation, and dependency and indemnity compensation.*

#### **Objective 1.1**

Maximize the physical, mental, and social functioning of disabled veterans including special populations of veterans by assessing their needs and coordinating the delivery of health care benefits and services

- 3 95% of discharges from Spinal Cord Injury Center bed sections will be to non-institutional settings

#### **Objective 1.2**

Improve the quality of life and economic status of service-disabled veterans and recognize their contributions and sacrifices made in defense of the Nation

- 3 Customer orientation for the compensation and pension program will be 90%
- 3 The program will achieve a National Accuracy Rate (core rating work) of 96%
- 3 Overall satisfaction with the compensation and pension program will be 90% (recently established key measure)
- 3 The average time to complete a rating-related action will be 74 days
- 3 The average appeal resolution time will be 365 days
- 3 The abandoned call rate will be reduced to 4%
- 3 The blocked call rate will be reduced to 4%

#### **Objective 1.3**

Enable service-disabled veterans to become employable and obtain and maintain suitable employment

- 3 70% of veterans exiting the vocational rehabilitation program will obtain and maintain suitable employment

#### **Objective 1.4**

Ensure survivors of service-disabled veterans are able to maintain a minimum standard of living and income through compensation and education benefits

- 3 The program will achieve a National Accuracy Rate (core rating work) of 96%
- 3 Overall satisfaction with the compensation and pension program will reach 90%
- 3 The average time to complete a rating-related action will be 74 days

- 3 The abandoned call rate will be reduced to 4%
- 3 The blocked call rate will be reduced to 4%

## **GOAL 2**

### **Ensure a Smooth Transition for Veterans from Active Military Service to Civilian Life.**

*Veterans will be fully reintegrated into their communities with minimum disruption to their lives through transitional health care, readjustment counseling services, education assistance, and home loan guaranties.*

#### **Objective 2.1**

Ease the reentry of new veterans into civilian life by increasing awareness of, access to, and use of benefits and services during transition

- 1 95% of veterans separating/retiring will participate in benefits briefing prior to discharge

#### **Objective 2.2**

Assist veterans in readjusting to civilian life by enhancing their ability to achieve educational and career goals

- 3 The MGIB usage rate will increase to 70%
- 3 The number of days to process original and supplemental claims will be 10 days and 7 days, respectively
- 3 95% of users will be highly satisfied
- 3 97% of benefits payments will be accurate

#### **Objective 2.3**

Improve the ability of veterans to purchase and retain a home through a loan guaranty program

- 3 The Foreclosure Avoidance Through Servicing (FATS) ratio will be 40%
- 1 Veteran satisfaction will increase to 95%
- 1 Lender satisfaction will increase to 80%

*As we head into the new millennium, VA will continue its commitment to meet the needs of this Nation's veterans and their families. The goals, objectives, performance measures and targets necessary to achieve this mission. Each and every VA employee is expected to be familiar with the Strategic Plan and identify how you support the goals, objectives, performance measures and targets.*

*VA's Strategic Plan centers around four strategic goals and an enabling goal. These goals are One VA in nature, the lives of disabled veterans, veterans in transition from the military, the overall veterans population and their families. The Strategic Plan identifies the major programs and management functions in order to achieve our strategic goals. In addition, the Strategic Plan identifies the progress toward achievement of our goals and objectives. This is not a complete list of the measures used throughout the VA. As VA Employees, we have provided examples of representative performance measures and targets used throughout the VA. We have also highlighted the Department's "key performance measures" and their targets. These are indicated by a circle around the "key performance measures" as critical to the Department's success, and they will be used to measure progress.*

*VA leadership challenges all employees to become familiar with the Strategic Plan so that you can better understand the mission of VA. The Strategic Plan is intended to improve the lives of our Nation's veterans, their families, and the Nation as a whole. We also encourage you to better understand the strategic direction of VA.*

**GOAL 3**

**Honor and Serve Veterans in Life and Memorialize Them in Death for Their Sacrifices on Behalf of the Nation**

*Veterans will have dignity in their lives, especially in time of need, through the provision of health care, pension programs and life insurance. The Nation will also memorialize them in death for the sacrifices they have made for their country.*

**Objective 3.1**

Improve the overall health of enrolled veterans including special populations of veterans through a health care system characterized by convenient access, high quality, satisfied patients, and cost efficiency

- 3 Improve performance on the Chronic Disease Care Index II to 82%
- 3 Improve performance on the Prevention Index II to 85%
- 3 72% of veterans will rate VA health care as very good or excellent
- 3 90% of patients will be seen within 20 minutes of their scheduled appointment at VA health care facilities
- 3 90% of patients will be able to obtain a non-urgent appointment with a specialist within 30 days of referral
- 3 90% of newly enrolled veterans will be able to obtain an initial non-urgent primary care appointment within 30 days
- 3 VA will reduce the average number of Veterans Health Service Standards problems reported in the annual outpatient feedback survey to:
  - 1 Patient Education 26%
  - 1 Visit Coordination 12%
  - 1 Pharmacy 16%
- 3 95% of the root cause analyses will be complete and in correct format within 45 calendar days from the time an event becomes known

**Objective 3.2**

Provide a level of income that brings eligible veterans and their survivors up to a standard of living that ensures well being and dignity in their lives

- 3 The program will achieve a National Accuracy Rate (core rating work) of 96%
- 3 Overall satisfaction with the compensation and pension program will reach 90%
- 3 The average time to complete a rating-related action will be 74 days
- 3 The abandoned call rate will be reduced to 4%
- 3 The blocked call rate will be reduced to 4%

**Objective 3.3**

Enhance the financial security for veterans' families through life insurance and other benefits programs

- 3 The percentage of blocked calls will be reduced to 1%
- 3 The accuracy of insurance disbursements will be maintained at 99%
- 3 Disbursements will be processed in an average of 3 work days
- 3 95% of veterans will be highly satisfied with VA insurance programs

**Objective 3.4**

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

- 3 88% of veterans will be served by a burial option in a national or State veterans cemetery within 75 miles of their residence
- 3 100% of respondents will rate the quality of service provided by national cemeteries as excellent

**Objective 3.5**

Provide veterans and their families with symbolic expressions of remembrance

- 1 The percentage of headstones and markers that are delivered undamaged and correctly inscribed will increase to 98%

## AND ENABLING GOALS

*and their families. This Employee Strategic Plan, a summary version of the Department's Strategic Plan, lays out how each employee plays an important role in accomplishing the Department's goals. That is why it is so important for VA to track progress on measures and targets in the Plan.*

*Reflecting the combined efforts of all VA organizations to deliver important services and programs that improve the lives of our veterans, and the Nation at large. Each goal is supported by objectives that describe what results are needed from our organizations. This plan identifies some of the performance measures and their associated targets for FY 2006 that VA will use to gauge progress throughout the Department, but illustrates ways in which we will monitor our progress. In this Strategic Plan for FY 2006, we provide a Strategic Plan to give you an idea of what we are striving to achieve. These are indicated by a bullet (•). We use a check mark (✓). Although all of VA's measures are important to achieving our mission, VA leaders have identified key measures on our strategic goals.*

*Describe your role in supporting the Department's mission and how you directly support the strategic goals that are important to you. Ask your supervisor to help you all employees to share the details of this plan with veterans and our Department's stakeholders to help them*

### **GOAL 4**

#### **Contribute to the Public Health, Socioeconomic Well Being, and History of the Nation**

*VA will support the public health of the Nation as a whole through medical research, medical education and training, and serve as a resource in the event of a national emergency or natural disaster. VA will support the socioeconomic well being of the Nation, our states, and our local communities through the provision of compensation and pension benefits, education, vocational rehabilitation, insurance, and home loan programs. VA will preserve the memory and sense of patriotism of the Nation by maintaining national cemeteries as national shrines and hosting patriotic and commemorative ceremonies and events that thank and honor our Nation's veterans and their families.*

#### **Objective 4.1**

Advance VA medical research and development programs to better address the needs of the veteran population and to contribute to the Nation's knowledge of disease and disability

- 3 The Institutional Review Board will achieve 100% compliance with necessary National Committee for Quality Assurance accreditation and maintenance requirements

#### **Objective 4.2**

Ensure an appropriate supply of health care providers for veterans and the Nation through sustained partnerships with the medical education community

- 3 Medical residents and other trainees will grade their VA clinical training experience with a score of 85% or better

#### **Objective 4.3**

Improve the Nation's response in the event of a national emergency or natural disaster by providing timely and effective contingency medical support and other services

- 1 100% of VA-managed Federal Coordinating Centers will complete at least one National Disaster Medical System casualty reception exercise every three years

#### **Objective 4.4**

Enhance the economic well being of the Nation through veterans benefits and business assistance programs

- 1 Veteran home ownership rate will be 12% higher than the general population

#### **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

- 3 100% of respondents will rate the appearance of national cemeteries as excellent

## **ENABLING GOAL**

### **Create an Environment That Fosters the Delivery of One VA World-Class Service to Veterans and Their Families Through Effective Communication and Management of People, Technology, Business Processes, and Financial Resources**

*VA's "enabling" goal is different from our four strategic goals. This goal and its corresponding objectives represent crosscutting activities that enable all organizational units to carry out the Department's mission.*

#### **Objective E.1**

Improve communications with veterans, employees, and stakeholders to share the Department's mission, goals, and results and to increase awareness of benefits and services for veterans and their families

- <sup>1</sup> 85% of VA employees will indicate that they understand VA's strategic goals

#### **Objective E.2**

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

- <sup>1</sup> The aggregate score on the *One VA* Employee Satisfaction Survey using FY 01 baseline will increase by 10%

#### **Objective E.3**

Implement a One VA Information Technology (IT) framework that supports the integration of information across business lines and provides a source of consistent, reliable, accurate, and secure information to veterans and their families, employees, and stakeholders

- <sup>1</sup> 100% of major VA IT systems subject to the Capital Asset Management process will conform to the *One VA* Architecture

#### **Objective E.4**

Improve the overall governance of VA and the management of its business processes

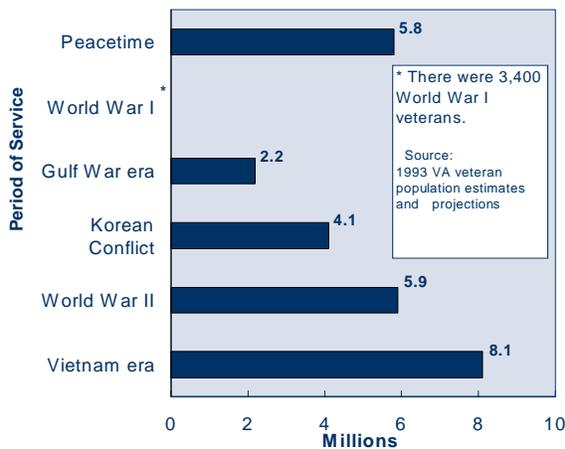
- <sup>1</sup> Customers will be satisfied with Shared Service Center Services 85% of the time

# WHO WE SERVE

## Our Continuous Focus On Our Nation's Veterans

Beginning with our Nation's struggle for freedom more than two centuries ago, approximately 42 million men and women have served their country during war time periods. Most (about 85 percent) served in one or more of the

**Figure 1**  
**Veteran Population by Period of Service**  
 (As of July 1, 1999)



**Table 1**  
**Projected Number\* of VA Programs Participants**

Program		FY 2001 Participants
<b>Medical Care</b>	Unique Patients	3,895,000
<b>Compensation</b>	Veterans	2,285,000
	Survivors/Children	302,000
<b>Pension</b>	Veterans	363,000
	Survivors	253,000
<b>Education</b>	Veterans/Servicepersons	309,000
	Reservists	71,000
	Survivors/Dependents	49,000
<b>Vocational Rehabilitation</b>	Veterans Receiving Services	55,000
<b>Housing</b>	Loans Guaranteed	250,000
<b>Insurance</b>	Administered Policies	2,047,000
	Supervised Policies (SGLI)	2,670,000
	Supervised Policies (VGLI)	388,000
<b>Burial</b>	Interments	88,000
	Graves Maintained	2,447,000
	Headstones/Markers Provided	349,000

\* Numbers are rounded to the nearest 1,000.

major conflicts of the 20th century, with World War II veterans representing nearly 40 percent of all American war participants. Today there are about 24.9 million veterans living in the United States and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico; 19 million of these veterans served during at least one wartime period. There are also approximately 45 million family members of living veterans and survivors of deceased veterans. Figure 1 shows the population size of veterans that VA serves by period of service. Table 1 shows the number of participants that VA projects to serve in our major program areas in FY 2001, and how we affect the lives of millions of veterans and their families.

# WHO WE ARE

*VA's mission is "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. President Lincoln's proclamation has captured America's commitment to many generations of veterans, and it is an enduring symbol of our support for those who have served. Today, President Lincoln's statement reflects VA's inherent responsibility to serve America's veterans and their families with dignity and compassion and to be their principal advocate in ensuring that they receive medical care, benefits, social support, and lasting memorials promoting the health, welfare, and dignity of all veterans in recognition of their service to this Nation.

VA's total obligations for FY 2001 are projected to be \$54.3 billion. Of that amount, \$24.1 billion will be for compensation and pension benefits, \$6.4 billion for other benefits and programs, \$23.5 billion will be spent on medical care, and \$323 million on burial operations and associated benefits.

VA employs approximately 220,000 individuals (including full and part-time employees) and almost 98 percent of these employees provide direct services to veterans and their families in VA field operations. VA has facilities in all 50 states, U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia. VA provides services and benefits through the following 10 major business lines:

- n Compensation
- n Medical Care
- n Medical Research
- n Medical Education
- n Pension
- n Education
- n Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment
- n Housing
- n Insurance
- n Burial

VA accomplishes delivery of veteran services through our 172 medical centers, 800 ambulatory care and community-based outpatient clinics, 206 veteran centers, 57 regional benefit offices, more than 24 military discharge centers, and 119 national cemeteries.