

## VA 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, and are the focus of our endeavors to serve our Nation’s veterans and their families.

## VA Vision

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 organizations and other stakeholders making them part of the decisionmaking process. We will cultivate a dedicated VA workforce of highly skilled employees who understand, believe in, and take pride in our vitally important mission.

## VA Core Values

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

### ***RESPECT AND COMMITMENT***

- **Veterans have earned our respect and commitment. We direct our efforts toward meeting 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 bring about improvements in the programs and services we provide.**

### ***EXCELLENCE IN SERVICES, PROGRAMS, AND PEOPLE***

- **We continually strive to meet or exceed 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 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.**

# *VA Strategic and Enabling Goals*

## ***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, life insurance, dependency and indemnity compensation, and dependents and survivors education. This system of benefits and services is aimed toward the broad outcome of restoring the individual capabilities of our Nation's disabled veterans.

## ***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, and employment services, including vocational rehabilitation, education assistance, and home loan guaranties.

## ***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 memorialize them in death for the sacrifices they have made for their country. VA will achieve this goal by improving the overall health of enrolled veterans, and providing a continuum of health care for these and other special populations of veterans. VA will also provide life insurance benefits to veterans, ensure that burial needs of veterans and eligible family members are met, and provide veterans and their families with symbolic expressions of remembrance.

## ***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 serving as a resource in the event of a national emergency or natural disaster. VA will support the socioeconomic well-being of the Nation through the provision of education, vocational rehabilitation, and home loan programs. VA will preserve the memory and sense of patriotism of the Nation by maintaining our national cemeteries as national shrines and hosting patriotic and commemorative ceremonies and events.

## ***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.

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## Secretary's Statement



Since joining VA, I have worked with my leadership team to position the Department to address the changing needs of veterans, and I am proud of the Department's accomplishments which have directly benefited veterans.

The summary that follows reflects our progress and recent trends in providing timely, high-quality services to veterans:

- VA continues to transform from a hospital-based system to a managed care/primary care system with 1,100 sites where health care is delivered to veterans. VA has expanded its system to include more than 500 additional ambulatory and community-based clinics.
  - In FY 1999, the number of unique patients treated by VA increased by 14.9 percent over FY 1998. In the same timeframe, outpatient visits increased by 15.8 percent.
  - VA launched a new uniform health benefits package for veterans that provides easier access to a broader array of services at VA facilities. The new plan permits VA to manage its resources more effectively, and provide a full continuum of health care to veterans.
  - VA is implementing a *Case Management* approach to claims processing, making individual employees and teams responsible for every aspect of the claims process. The *case manager* keeps the veteran informed of the status of the claim by written, telephone or personal contact. With this level of individual or team involvement, our commitment to enhanced accuracy in our claims process and better information for veterans is assured.
- VA has made significant improvements in telephone service. In the case of benefits, the blocked call rate (busy signal) has been reduced from 52 percent in 1998 to less than 4 percent in 2000. VA established a toll-free telephone service for education beneficiaries and the hold time for Insurance program phone calls is now 20 seconds. In addition, VA established Internet sites where veterans and beneficiaries can obtain information and interact with VA.
  - The Vice President's National Partnership for Reinventing Government (NPR) has recognized VA as the government leader in plain language letter writing. VA sends out millions of pieces of correspondence annually. Since letters are still the primary means of communication with our veterans families, VA is rewriting the hundreds of pattern letters and paragraphs that account for the majority of the correspondence we send out.
  - A joint effort by the Departments of Defense, Labor, and Veterans Affairs provided job assistance to 130,000 disabled veterans with special needs.
  - In 1999, VA opened Saratoga National Cemetery in New York, and Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Illinois. In 2000, VA opened Dallas - Fort Worth National Cemetery and Ohio Western Reserve National Cemetery.

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- Four state veterans cemeteries, located in Stockley Center, Delaware; Madison, Indiana; and Higginsville and Springfield, Missouri, were opened in FY 2000. State veterans cemeteries complement the system of VA national cemeteries in providing burial options for veterans. The State Cemetery Grants Program provides aid to states in establishing, expanding, or improving state veterans cemeteries.

In addition to these important program accomplishments, I am also extremely proud of our employees across the country who make delivery of benefits and services to veterans and their families possible. It is through their dedication, skill, and knowledge that we are able to provide veterans with the high quality service they have earned and deserve. To ensure veterans are provided with the best we can offer, we must continuously challenge ourselves to improve. To that end, we have inaugurated *One VA*, an initiative that seeks to strengthen internal alignment and cooperation across organizational lines to improve service delivery.

To meet the *One VA* challenge, we invited employees and veterans' advocates from across the country to attend five major regional conferences to become *One VA* ambassadors. Participants worked together to learn about ongoing *One VA* success stories, to gain insight from other world-class organizations that have successfully undergone similar transformation, and to identify new and creative ways for the Department to provide seamless services to veterans. Many of the initiatives associated with *One VA* are included in this plan as strategies. Incorporating these initiatives in the plan demonstrates our understanding of the critical importance of ideas, initiatives, and strategies developed by our employees and managers across the entire organization.

This Strategic Plan is part of VA's effort to strengthen the overall management and

stewardship of VA resources, and continue VA's progress toward improving the implementation of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA). It is intended to communicate a top-level summary of the long-term direction of VA.

The framework of this plan centers around VA's four strategic goals and an enabling goal. These goals are *One VA* in nature, reflecting the combined efforts of all organizational elements to serve our Nation's veterans and their families. Supporting each goal, VA has developed outcome-oriented objectives and identified key strategies and processes, external factors, and performance measures and targets for 2006. VA's effectiveness will be determined by how well the needs and expectations of veterans are met. VA's success will also be measured by how we manage resources to provide services and benefits in a way that satisfies the American public's commitment to veterans.

In this vein, VA will implement each of the goals and objectives in this Strategic Plan in a manner that reflects our commitment to world-class service. With respect to each *One VA* goal and objective, we will continually strive to meet or exceed the service delivery expectations of veterans and their families by delivering accurate, timely, and courteous service in a cost-effective and efficient manner.

I am confident we are an effective organization today. However, I want to stress to our stakeholders, the American taxpayer, VA employees, and most important, our Nation's veterans, that the Department of Veterans Affairs will continue to strive for excellence in all areas.

Hershel W. Gober  
Acting Secretary