

Internet/Intranet Services

REASON FOR ISSUE: This directive establishes policy for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employees in managing, maintaining, establishing, and presenting information on VA's Internet/Intranet Service Sites and use of related Internet services (hereafter referred to as "Internet").

SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES: The directive defines the organizational responsibilities for VA Internet services that includes but is not limited to the use of File Transfer Protocol (FTP), Hypertext Markup Language (HTML), Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP), Web pages, active server pages (asp), e-mail forums, and list servers.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: The Office of Information and Technology (005) and the Office of Policy and Program Assistance (045A) are responsible for the material contained in this directive.

RELATED HANDBOOK: VA Handbook 6102, Internet/Intranet Services.

RESCISSION: None.

CERTIFIED BY:



Acting Assistant Secretary for
Information and Technology

**BY DIRECTION OF THE ACTING
SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:**



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Internet/Intranet Services

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

a. This directive sets forth policies and responsibilities for the planning, design, maintenance support, and any other functions related to the administration of a VA Internet/Intranet Service Site or related service (hereinafter referred to as Internet). This directive applies to all organizational elements in the Department.

b. This policy applies to all individuals designing and/or maintaining VA Internet Service Sites; including but not limited to full time and part time employees, contractors, interns, and volunteers. This policy applies to all VA Internet/Intranet domains and servers that utilize VA resources. This includes but is not limited to va.gov and other extensions such as, “.com, .edu, .mil, .net, .org,” and personal Internet service pages managed from individual workstations.

2. POLICY

a. VA promotes the secure and effective use of Internet services to improve access to and delivery of information to veterans, their families, and the general public. This information will include the policies, programs, activities, and objectives of VA. Internet services will also be used to obtain information from public and private organizations, and as a means of empowering employees in their work.

b. Organizational use of Internet services must reflect the mission of VA, and support VA goals and objectives. These services must support legitimate, mission related activities of the VA and be consistent with prudent operational, security, and privacy considerations. Organizational use of government office equipment and peripherals should be consistent with the provisions of any applicable VA Directive.

c. VA Internet Service Sites must be designed to support the widest range of potential users and computing platforms and should be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. **Secretary of Veterans Affairs.** The Secretary has designated the Department's Chief Information Officer as the senior agency official responsible for the Department's information technology (IT) programs.

b. Chief Information Officer Council. The Chief Information Officer (CIO) Council is responsible for the effective use of VA's Internet and other IT resources, directives, and policies governing the use and implementation of Internet and other IT resources. The CIO Council shall:

- (1) Establish policy and procedural guidance with respect to establishing, operating, and maintaining VA Internet Service Sites;
- (2) Maintain liaison with Administration Heads, Assistant Secretaries and other key officials, to ensure effective dissemination of VA information via the Internet:
- (3) Provide technical support consistent with existing CIO responsibilities;
- (4) Review and approve additions and changes to Internet policy and procedures as suggested by the Electronic VA (EVA) Committee; and
- (5) Provide recommendations on Internet services and risk management issues.

c. Electronic VA (EVA) Committee. The EVA Committee will include representation from all Administrations and staff offices. The EVA Committee shall:

- (1) Make recommendations on the use of the Internet/Intranet and the associated Web sites and services within the VA;
- (2) Meet quarterly at a minimum; more frequently at the direction of the CIO;
- (3) Identify and maintain a comprehensive list of all VA Internet services; and
- (4) Maintain VA Directive 6102, Internet/Intranet Services, and related handbooks and/or associated documents.

d. Administration Heads, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials. These officials will ensure the implementation of VA Internet policy within their respective Administrations and Staff Offices. These officials will also ensure that VA information and information resources are protected from inappropriate use, access, tampering, destruction, and unauthorized release of sensitive information.

e. Program Office. The head of each Program Office with an official VA Internet Service Site shall:

- (1) Own and be responsible for the content of the documents (including papers, studies, forms, pictures, and graphics), ensuring timeliness, accuracy, and currency of information posted on the identified Internet Service Site;
 - (2) Ensure that VA Internet services conform to §508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; and
 - (3) Ensure that the Internet Service Site server environment is secured as outlined in VA Handbook 6210, Automated Information Security Procedures.
- f. **Webmasters:** Each Program Office with an official Internet Service Site will appoint a Webmaster to maintain the site.

4. REFERENCES

- a. Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch. Part 1 of Executive Order 12674 – Implementing Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch. (5 CFR 2635)
- b. Executive Order 13011, Federal Information Technology, §3(a)(1).
- c. “Guidance and Model Language for Federal Web Site Privacy Policies,” June 2, 1999, Office of Management and Budget; OMB M99-18.
- d. Public Law 105220. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (29USC 794(d)).
- e. Public Law 105-220, Section 508.
- f. Recommended Executive Branch Model Policy/Guidance on “Limited Personal Use” of Government Office Equipment Including Information Technology, May 19, 1999, Federal CIO Council.
- g. VA Directive 6001, Limited Personal Use of Government Office Equipment Including Information Technology.
- h. VA Directive 6210, Automated Information Systems Security.
- i. VA Directive 6300, Records and Information Management and VA Handbook 6300.5, Procedures for Establishing and Managing Privacy Act System of Records.
- j. 5 USC §301.
- k. “Privacy Policies and Data Collection on Federal Web Sites,” June 22, 2000, Office of Management and Budget, OMB 00-13.

5. DEFINITIONS

a. **Broken Link.** A hyperlink to a non-existent or non-operational page or server; also known as a “dead link”.

b. **Domain Name.** A meaningful and easy-to-remember “handle” for an Internet address.

c. **Editorial Support.** Editorial services provided by the Program Office with Web site responsibility.

d. **Home Page.** Primary page or starting point reached through the URL. The home page is described as a single document but can contain multiple screens. An organizational home page contains information about a definable organization such as the Department, an agency, or a division of an agency. A personal home page contains information related to an individual employee, such as a scientist who is of interest to the public because of his or her special expertise.

e. **Internet.** A network of information resources which relies on three mechanisms to make these resources readily available to the public.

(1) A uniform naming convention for services located on the Web, e.g.; URLs (Uniform Resource Locators).

(2) Protocols to access named resources on-line, e.g.; HTTP or FTP (HyperText Transfer Protocol; File Transfer Protocol).

(3) Hypertext, to facilitate navigation among available resources, e.g. HTML (Hypertext Markup Language).

f. **Intranet.** A network of information resources fully comparable to and interoperable with the Internet, but which is not readily available to the public.

(1) Intranet access may be limited to the Department or an Administration/ Program Office.

(2) Intranet access may be available to individuals or classes of users, across security firewalls.

g. **Internet Service.** A network-based information/service resource operated by a VA entity for the use of internal and/or external users. This includes but is not limited to FTP, HTML, SMTP, Web pages, active server pages, e-mail forums, chat rooms, and list servers.

h. **Official Internet Service Site.** An information resource established and/or maintained by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for the purpose of supporting its mission of service to Veterans and their families, for which the Department is solely responsible for the content of the site, and which must comply with VA internal directives.

i. **Program Office.** Any component instrumentality of the VA organization for which a station number and/or routing symbol exists.

j. **Server.** A Web server is a computer program that serves HTML files requested by a browser. The server provides access to one or more collections of documents using Web formats and protocols. Each Web server has main entry points or home page, although numerous files or pages are usually directly addressable. VA uses three types of Internet servers:

(1) Development servers are used as platforms to develop and review Web pages before releasing them to the public;

(2) Staging servers are used by technical support to house files for review and scanning before moving them to the production server; and

(3) Production servers contain the current files accessed by VA's Web sites.

k. **Technical Support.** Services provided by the Program Office with Web site responsibility. See Responsibilities, para. 3.e. (5).

l. **Thumbnail.** A miniature version of a larger graphic. The typical size of these pictures is often in the range of 40 by 60 pixels. These pictures are placed within documents to provide the user with a small version of the image, and to reduce the load time of a Web page. Usually the picture is also an anchor to another page that has the expanded graphic.

m. **Web (or The Web).** A term used to apply indiscriminately to the Internet/Intranet environment services.

n. **Webmaster.** An Internet service administrator who possesses the skills, knowledge and ability to work alone, or with a consortium of Information Technology (IT) professionals, to design, publish, and maintain Web sites that provide a variety of information services to the public. This may also be the individual with primary responsibility for the server. By convention, each Web server maintains a Webmaster e-mail address (e.g., webmaster@www.va.gov) to which suggestions and inquiries about the site may be directed.