

**DIRECTIVES MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
PROCEDURAL HANDBOOK**

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE.** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Handbook provides procedures for the preparation and submission of VHA Directives Management System (DMS) documents.
- 2. SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES.** This revised VHA Handbook contains updated terminology and mandatory procedures for the publication of VHA numbered administrative documents. It includes changing the maximum time for concurrence to 10 working days.
- 3. RELATED ISSUES.** VA Directive 6330 and VHA Directive 6330.
- 4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE.** VHA Forms, Publications, and Records Management Service (19E1), is responsible for the contents of this VHA Handbook. Questions may be addressed to 202-461-5867.
- 5. RESCISSIONS.** VHA Handbook 6330, dated May 8, 1996, is rescinded
- 6. RECERTIFICATION.** The VHA Handbook is scheduled for recertification on, or before, the last working day of December 2013.

Michael J. Kussman, MD, MS, MACP
Under Secretary for Health

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DIRECTIVES MANAGEMENT SYSTEM PROCEDURAL HANDBOOK

1. PURPOSE

This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Handbook contains required, VHA-wide procedures for preparing, approving, numbering, and publishing VHA Directives Management System (DMS) documents.

2. DEFINITIONS

There are two types of VHA numbered administrative documents, Directive (policy) documents and Non-directive (non-mandated) documents. ***NOTE:** Samples of document types with specific information as to content are in the Appendices.*

a. Directive (Policy) Documents

(1) **Directives.** There are two types of Directives.

(a) Temporary. A temporary Directive defines policy that has a limited time span or new program policies that will be incorporated in DMS Handbooks at a later date. A temporary Directive is issued for no longer than 5 years and has an expiration date. It is numbered by the year in which it is published; and may have attachments. A temporary Directive has only seven paragraphs: Purpose, Background, Policy, Action, References, Follow-Up Responsibility, and Rescission.

(b) DMS or Permanent. VHA DMS Directives establish mandatory VHA policies for VHA Programs. These Directives do not have an expiration date, but must be recertified every 5 years.

This type of Directive consists of a transmittal sheet followed by a narrative text with the following paragraphs: Purpose, Background (optional), Policy, Responsibilities, References, and Definitions (see App. B).

(2) **Handbook.** A Handbook is directive in nature and describes procedures for implementing VHA Programs identified in DMS Directives. Handbooks do not have an expiration date, but must be recertified every 5 years. However, it must have a transmittal sheet, a table of contents, and a narrative text, and may have appendices. ***NOTE:** Handbooks are used in the conversion of the VHA Manuals to DMS.* The first paragraphs are: Purpose, Background and/or Authority, Definitions, and Scope followed by paragraphs that describe the implementation process and responsibilities.

(3) **VHA Numbered Memoranda.** Numbered VHA Memoranda contain program operational policy and procedures only for VHA Central Office staff and do not apply to field facilities. Each VHA Memorandum contains five mandatory paragraphs with an optional sixth paragraph for references: Purpose, Policy, Action, References (optional), Responsibility, and

Rescissions. A VHA Numbered Memorandum carries a rescission date of 5 years, unless a shorter period of time is appropriate.

b. **Non-directive Documents.** Non-directive documents consist of the following;

(1) **Information Letter (IL).** An IL provides information, not policy, to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) staff. ILs can be: reminders about the implementation of VA or VHA policy; clarification of information provided in policy documents; information on new advances in medical treatment that are recommended, not mandated, for VA patients; announcements of events, awards, meetings, etc. of interest to VHA staff nationwide. An IL automatically expires in 6 months.

(2) **Program Guides and Training Program Guides**

(a) **Program Guides.** Program Guides contain non-mandatory and non-directive material to serve as guidelines for procedures or the development of a program defined in VHA Directives at the field facility level. Program Guides are issued with the approval and signature of the originator's Chief Officer. Program Guides use the same format as VHA Handbooks, i.e., the use of titled paragraphs.

(b) **Training Program Guides.** Training Program Guides contain non-directive guidelines and instructions for conducting a specific course of training. Training Program Guides are issued with the approval of the Deputy Under Secretary for Health under the signature of the originating Program Officer. Training Program Guides use the same format as a VHA Handbooks, i.e., use of titled paragraphs.

(3) **Notice.** Notices are used to communicate general announcements, either Department or administration-wide. All notices are automatically rescinded after 4 years.

(a) A notice is used to rescind a Manual, make an announcement of a new award, or provide specialized information such as a request for proposal (RFP).

(b) Unlike DMS Directives and Handbooks, notices are not accompanied by a transmittal sheet. Since notices are generally short documents (no more than 1 to 5 pages in length), they are organized by paragraphs only.

(4) **Information Bulletin (IB).** IBs are staff, beneficiary, or public information documents that are distributed in a printed format and stocked in large quantities for distribution through VHA Program Offices and facilities. These include pamphlets, brochures, booklets, fact sheets, etc.

c. **Document Management Officer (DMO) and Publications Control Officer (PCO).**

The designated Chief of VHA Forms, Publications, and Records Management Service serves as the DMO and PCO. The DMO, or designee, approves documents before they are assigned to VHA Executive Correspondence Office (101B). The PCO, or designee, approves VHA print publication projects and is responsible for the Publication budget.

3. SCOPE

This VHA Handbook provides style, format, and process standards for VHA DMS documents. This Handbook establishes the requirement for reviewing and updating policy documents every 5 years. The procedures contained in this Handbook are mandatory for all publications defined, and apply to all VHA nationwide numbered administrative documents.

NOTE: Requirements for facility DMS documents are to be contained in VHA Handbook 6330.02(to be published).

4. VHA STYLE AND USAGE STANDARDS

a. **General Preparation Guidance.** All VHA DMS documents must be clear, concise, and logically composed. They must be organized and arranged in a manner that helps users locate information quickly. *NOTE: The United States Government Printing Office Style Manual is to be used for editorial guidance concerning style usage that is not addressed in this Handbook.* The following guidelines must be followed when preparing VHA DMS documents:

(1) **Software and Font.** All documents, except IBs, are prepared with the current word processing software that is the VA standard using Times New Roman font, 12 pitch. IBs can be prepared in graphics or publications software programs using appropriate fonts and pitch, but must be convertible to portable document file (PDF) format.

(2) **Margins, Tabs and Spacing.** All documents, with the exception of some IBs, have a ½ inch margin at the top of the page and one inch margins on each side and the bottom of the page. The standard tab is set at five spaces (.25 in). Paragraphs are single spaced with a double space between each. A double space is used after each punctuation mark except for a comma.

(3) **Headers and Footers.** Headers and footers must be inserted at the creation of the document. Header data indicates this is a VHA document and identifies the document type (i.e., Directive, Handbook, or Notice, etc.). It contains the appropriate functional number and the approval date, which is assigned by the DMO. VHA Memoranda and VHA Notices are identified by “VHA” followed by the calendar year in which issued and a unique sequential number which is assigned by the DMO, for example: VHA NOTICE 2007-00. Headers are at the top of the page according to page number. Page numbers are placed in footers at the bottom of the page. The identifying document number and the page number are always on the same side of the sheet. *NOTE: See 19E1 staff for assistance.*

(4) **Section Breaks.** Documents that have a Transmittal sheet, Table of Contents, and/or Appendix use section break odd page between sections. The use of this section break facilitates the different headers and footers (i.e., page number) of the sections of the document.

(5) **Words.** Use short words, active verbs, and present tense. Avoid unnecessary words, personal pronouns, colloquial phrases, and gender specific references.

(6) **Sentences.** Use short compact sentences (15 words on the average) and active voice; tie thoughts together; limit qualifying statements; and list conditions, steps, and exceptions separately.

(7) **Paragraphs.** All paragraphs must be numbered. Do not use bullets. Use short paragraphs and headings that reflect paragraph contents; state main points in the first sentence; tie sentences together; state the rule, then the exception; and use cross references carefully and sparingly. *NOTE: Cross references are to be used by paragraph or subparagraph. Do not use footnotes.*

(8) **Use of Metric.** Use metric equivalents in VHA documents as appropriate.

(9) **Web Links.** Web links must be internet sites unless the material is not available on the internet. When intranet sites are the only option, a statement must accompany the link stating “this is an internal VA link not available to the public.” Whenever possible include internet and intranet links that provide equivalent information.

b. **Paragraph Numbering and Titles**

(1) Document titles and titles for appendices are in bold print, all capitals, and centered.

(2) Title or main paragraphs numbering begins with the numeral 1 flush with the left margin. The title is in bold print and all capitals.

(3) Subparagraphs are used when they add meaning or make a document easier to use. If a title is used for one subparagraph, all others of the same "rank" are given titles, as appropriate. Subdivide text only if two or more paragraphs exist.

(4) Subparagraphs are indented five spaces. Carryover lines are flush with the left margin.

(5) The following numbering scheme is used for paragraphs in all VHA DMS documents except IBs. Arabic numbers and lower case letters are used for main and subparagraphs and the following subdivisions:

1. (always flush to left margin) (introductory words are **bold**) and in UPPER CASE.

a. (must indent only 5 spaces) (introductory words are **bold underlined**).

(1) (indent 5 spaces) (introductory words are **bolded.**).

(a) (indent 5 spaces) (introductory words are underlined).

1. (indent 8 spaces).

a. (indent 8 spaces).

(1) (indent 11 spaces).

(a) (indent 11 spaces).

c. **Punctuation.**

(1) A colon must be used at the end of title paragraph, if the text follows on the same line. For example: **1. PURPOSE:** This VHA (type of issue) does what (establishes, defines, etc.). If text begins with a subparagraph no punctuation is used following the title of a main paragraph.

(2) A period must be used at the end of an introductory subparagraph title when text follows on the same line. For example: a. **Subparagraph Accents.** The text follows on the same line.

(3) Titles are not to have punctuation when text does not follow on the same line. For example: a. **Books**

d. **Citation of Documents with Expiration Dates.** Documents with expiration dates are not referenced in any permanent document; i.e., Directives and Handbooks. Issues with expiration dates are Temporary Directives, Information Letters, and Notices.

e. **Approval and Signature.** Each VHA Directive, Handbook, Memorandum, Notice, Information Letter, Guide, etc., is approved and signed by an appropriate official (see VHA Directive 6330). The signature block, typed name and title of the approving official, must appear four returns after the end of the last paragraph, five spaces from the center to the right side of the page.

f. **Appendix.** When more than one table, graph, chart, "completed" sample form, and other illustrations are used to convey lengthy "how to prepare" instructions, they are to be identified as an "Appendix" and are placed at the end of the Directive, Handbook, program guide, etc., beginning with Appendix A. These types of documents are Attachments in temporary Directives. PDF files may be used to attach these documents.

g. **Reports.** The Reports Control Number (RCN) (old Reports Control System (RCS) number) always appears at the end of the title line in Directives when there is a report requirement (see Appendix A). This number is assigned by the VHA Reports Control Officer (19E1).

h. **Forms.** Forms must be designed in a fillable format by 19E1. Program Offices need to plan adequate time for form creation to ensure forms are incorporated in the documents, usually as an Appendix. The VHA Forms staff (19E1) is responsible for final form design and for making determinations regarding the need for Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval of the information collection. **NOTE:** *Forms requesting information from the public must have OMB approval before they can be distributed. This process can take up to 1 year to complete.*

i. **Changes to Documents.** Changes are made by publishing a new or revised document.

(1) Changes are made by, or for, the official responsible for the VHA issue, unless another program office is now responsible for the subject matter.

(2) All required concurrences are needed along with a new VA Form 10-2479, Justification for Proposed VHA Issue.

5. VHA DOCUMENT PREPARATION

a. VHA Transmittal Sheet

(1) Each VHA DMS Directive or Handbook must be accompanied by a transmittal sheet.

(2) The transmittal sheet identifies the reason for issue, major changes, related issues (primarily Directives or Handbooks), the responsible office, and any affected rescissions.

(3) The transmittal sheet carries the signature of the Under Secretary for Health.

(4) The transmittal sheet contains a header, centered subject line, and the required paragraphs as shown in Appendix A.

(5) The footer of the first page of the transmittal sheet carries the page number T-1 at the far right.

b. Table of Contents. VHA Handbooks, Program Guides, Training Program Guides, and some Information Bulletins contain a table of contents. Table of contents pages are numbered beginning with i. Set tabs at Left .25 inches and Right 6.5 inches with a leader. **NOTE:** *The table of contents in this Handbook is the sample for preparation.*

c. Document Format. Documents are formatted according to the instructions contained in Paragraphs 2 and 4 of this Handbook and follow the examples contained in the Appendixes.

6. VHA DOCUMENT SUBMISSION RESPONSIBILITIES

a. Program Offices. The originating Program Office is responsible for:

(1) Preparing VHA documents, according to the specifications of this Handbook, for the signature of the appropriate approving official.

(2) Entering documents and requests for concurrences in VA's electronic document tracking system (currently WebCIMS).

(3) Obtaining concurrences from all elements affected by, or having a vested interest in, the document. The maximum time assigned for offices to concur is 10 working days. A lesser time is allotted for minor changes.

(a) If concurrence or non-concurrence cannot be provided within that time period, the concurring office requests an extension using the document tracking system stating the reason for the extension and the expected date of completion.

(b) An office that does not concur with a proposed document must prepare a statement of non-concurrence signed by the Director of the non-concurring Program Office and place the statement in the document tracking system with an assignment to the originating Program Office.

(c) If the originating office can resolve the non-concurrence, the package is assigned back to the nonconcurring office with a request for concurrence. The originating office includes the original statement of non-concurrence in the backup material to VA Form 10-2479.

(d) If concurrence has not been received and no request for an extension was made, the originating office must make a minimum of two follow-up attempts. After these attempts have been made and documented, the originating office forwards the proposed document to the approving official with a recommendation to approve. The package must be accompanied by a briefing slip citing those services or agencies which have not provided concurrence nor requested extensions.

(e) Concurring officials are to limit their review to the substantive areas for which they have functional responsibility and/or knowledge. They are not to withhold or delay concurrence because of a personal preference for writing or punctuation style.

(4) Completing VA Form 10-2479. **NOTE:** See Appendix H for instruction on completing VA Form 10-2479.

(5) Completing VA Form 559a, Request for New or Revised Form or Form Letter, when a new or revised form is included with the document.

(6) Submitting the hard copy document folder, along with a completed VA Form 10-2479, and all backup information, to the VHA DMO (19E1) for final review, editing, submission for signature, publishing, and archiving. This action is accompanied by making an assignment for final processing to 19E1 in the document tracking system.

(a) The left hand side of the folder contains:

1. VA Form 10-2479. The Master VA Form 10-2479 must contain the printed names of all concurring officials with backup of the signatures of the originating office official responsible for the document, the Chief Officer, and concurrence signatures or notation of electronic concurrences with copies attached.

2. Backup Material. The backup material contains original documents which contain signatures; i.e., concurring or non-concurring memorandums, etc.; a copy(ies) of document(s) being rescinded or replaced; copy of authority; one copy of each referenced form; and any other material essential to the justification for the new issue. **NOTE:** Submit all originals in the final document package, which goes to the Directives Management staff (19E1) for final processing. The DMO, or designee, is responsible for the retention of this document's history file.

(b) The right hand side of the folder contains the printed document for final review. This document must match the latest word document in VA's electronic tracking system.

NOTE: A checklist is provided in Appendix I.

b. **Document Management Officer (DMO) 19E1.** The DMO, or designee, is responsible for:

(1) Reminding Program Offices of documents that are expiring or in need of recertification at least 90 days in advance of the due date.

(2) Reviewing the presented document for format, concurrences, backup materials, and correct media. 19E1 staff conducts a detailed line-by-line, word-for-word editorial review. *NOTE: Documents that do not follow the style and usage standards contained in this Handbook may be returned to the originating Program Office for proper preparation.*

(3) Assigning the completed document to VHA Executive Correspondence (101B) for review and signature using the document tracking system.

(4) Making changes recommended by 101B or 10A with the approval of the responsible Program Office.

(5) Assigning appropriate numbers and dates to signed documents.

(6) Distributing approved documents electronically to the VHA Publications Distribution e-mail group. *NOTE: When a signed hard copy of the document is required, or multiple hard copies, contact the DMO (19E1).*

(7) Publishing approved documents to the VHA Publications internet and intranet sites and moving rescinded and expired documents to the Archives.

(8) Maintaining VHA document historical files.

7. INFORMATION BULLETIN (IB) INSTRUCTIONS

IBs are printed products that are numbered in order to facilitate ordering and identification. IBs do not follow the document standards in Paragraph 4. *NOTE: All VHA printed publications are submitted to VA Publications Service (001A-97P) for contracting through the Government Printing Office.*

a. Program Office Responsibilities

(1) **Product Design.** Product design can be accomplished by contractors, VHA Program Office staff, VA Printing and Publications Service (0497), etc. 19E1 publications staff will assist with decisions concerning design. Design work will be accomplished in applications that can be converted to PDF. Products will display the IB and stock numbers assigned by the Publication Control Office (PCO). All VHA printed products must display the VA signature or seal.

(2) **Printing Request and Distribution Plan.** Program Offices must complete VA Form 7700, Request for Reproduction Services, including distribution instructions.

(a) If products are to be stocked at the VA Service and Distribution Center (SDC), an initial distribution can be requested using VA Forms 7225 and 7225a, Distribution Instructions for Printed Matter. Address lists for additional recipients not listed on VA Form 7225 must be provided in database format (Excel or WORD table) to 19E1 by the Program Office.

(b) If the product is to be distributed only once, Program Offices must provide mailing lists for all addressees.

(3) **Approval of Proofs.** The Program Office is responsible for approval of all proofs of printed products. Information regarding who is responsible for proofing products must be indicated on VA Form 7700.

(4) **Approval of Stock Replenishment Requests.** The Program Office is notified by the PCO, or designee, when stock of their products need replenishment at the SDC. The Program Office must indicate their approval in order for stock to be replenished.

(5) **Funding.** When planning new projects, Program Offices need to include funding for associated printing projects. 19E1 can assist in providing estimates.

b. **Publication Control Office (PCO) (19E1) Responsibilities.** The PCO is responsible for:

(1) **Oversight of VHA Print Publication Process.** The PCO is responsible for the printing and distribution of all VHA IBs. The PCO assists Program Offices with preparation of the proper forms, recommendations for media and format, and funding.

(2) **Assigning a Unique IB Number.** IB numbers are assigned by the PCO to printed products based on the order received or a prior existing IB number for the product.

(3) **Assigning a Stock Number.** The PCO will coordinate with the SDC to assign a Stock Number for printed products being stocked at the SDC.

(4) **Replenishing Stock.** The PCO contacts the responsible Program Office when Stock Replenishment Requests are received and completes forms to accomplish approved stock replenishment.

(5) **Funding.** The PCO funds may be available for print publications when other funding has not been acquired. *NOTE: Funding of requests is tracked by a Control Number issued by the DMO.*

SAMPLE OF VHA TRANSMITTAL SHEET

Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Washington, DC 20420

VHA DIRECTIVE XXX
Transmittal Sheet
(Date)

SAMPLE VHA TRANSMITTAL SHEET (RCN 10-XXXX)

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE.** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive establishes (revises, replaces etc.) VHA policy for (give a brief statement outlining policy or reason for Directive).
- 2. SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES.** Brief summary paragraph or list significant changes by paragraph. Major changes are as follows:
 - a. Paragraph X: Defines xxxxxx.
 - b. Paragraph XX: Establishes, etc.
- 3. RELATED ISSUES.** If appropriate, list any Handbooks or any other DMS document related to this issue or None.
- 4. REPORTS.** (OPTIONAL) Only cite when there is a report requirement. The Reports Control Number (RCN) (old RCS number) will always appear at the end of the subject line.
- 5. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE.** This paragraph will list the title of the official under which the author wrote the Directive. This official will be responsible for its update, recertification, and questions regarding the issue. For example: RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: The Chief Patient Care Services (11/111A) is responsible for the contents of this VHA Directive. Questions may be referred to the (list title or office not individual's names), and telephone number.
- 6. RESCISSIONS.** List any documents that are being rescinded or replaced FOR EXAMPLE: The following VHA material is rescinded: VHA Directive xxx and VHA Manual xxx, Part x, Chapter xx, (etc.).
- 7. RECERTIFICATION.** This VHA Directive is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of (month and year).

Signature Block for the
Under Secretary for Health

Distribution: (Is assigned by DMO)

(The Transmittal sheet must be numbered beginning with T-1) **T-1**

SAMPLE OF DMS VHA DIRECTIVE

(Date)

VHA DIRECTIVE XXXX

SAMPLE OF DMS VHA DIRECTIVE

1. PURPOSE: The purpose states the reason for establishing the Directive; e.g., “This VHA Directive establishes (or updates) policy concerning (the Program).....,”

2. BACKGROUND: (Optional) Presents history, authority, or other pertinent information that is non-directive, and/or definitions of subject matter terms.

a. **Directives.** Directives are short, concise documents of policy, and should be no more than 10 pages in length. If a Directive is longer than 10 pages, the Directive needs to be prepared containing the policy statement with the lengthy mandatory procedures made into a Handbook. Directives contain policy only; however, if it makes more sense to the reader, short procedures may be included as an appendix to the Directive with detailed procedures published separately in a Handbook.

b. **Paragraphs.** VHA DMS Directives include, at a minimum the following paragraphs: PURPOSE, POLICY, RESPONSIBILITY (identify responsibilities and under service’s jurisdiction, and DEFINITIONS which identifies program elements. *NOTE: All program procedures will be issued in a Handbook using the same identifying number as the Directive which identified responsibility for the program.* The following paragraphs are optional and may be used one without the other: BACKGROUND, REPORT, or REFERENCE(S).

c. **Appendix.** In exceptional cases, an Appendix may be with the basic Directive (check with the DMO); otherwise, instructions or guidelines must go into a Handbook.

d. **Page Numbers.** The first page of a Directive (which is the transmittal sheet) carries a “T”(for transmittal)-number. The first page of a Directive is always numbered on the bottom right-hand side of the page and is numbered "1." Even numbers are on the left side at the bottom of the page beginning with “2.”

e. **Text.** The format for the text follows the requirements outlined in subparagraph 2a. Directives are short documents (less than 10 pages in length), so parts and chapters are not to be used. Text is organized or broken by using subparagraphs as required by paragraph 4 of this Handbook.

VHA DIRECTIVE XXXX

(Date)

3. POLICY: The policy statement must be a brief statement which gives VHA's policy on the subject. This statement sets the parameters of the Directive. An example would be: It is VHA policy that (you may use an abbreviated mission statement).

4. RESPONSIBILITIES: List responsibilities and brief action requirements. Lengthy procedures are to be placed in a Handbook.

5. REPORT(S): (OPTIONAL) Only cite when there is a report requirement. The Reports Control Number (RCN) (old RCS number) always appears at the end of the subject line.

6. REFERENCE(S): (OPTIONAL) Cite any references pertaining to the subject. Expired or documents containing an expiration date may not be used as a reference.

7. DEFINITIONS: These definitions identify program elements, which may be associated with program Handbooks.

SAMPLE OF A TEMPORARY VHA DIRECTIVE

Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Washington, DC 20420

VHA DIRECTIVE 2008-XXX

(Date)

SAMPLE OF A TEMPORARY VHA DIRECTIVE (RCN 10-XXXX)

1. PURPOSE: The purpose states the reason for the Directive; e.g.:

a. “This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive establishes (defines, updates) policy concerning

b. “This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive presents new requirements for,” and

2. BACKGROUND: (Optional) A brief background may be given to provide any explanation that will facilitate a better understanding for the purpose of the Directive.

a. Temporary Directives should not be longer than 20 pages including attachments.

b. A rescission (expiration) date of 5 years from the approval date, is assigned by the Directives Management Officer (DMO), unless otherwise requested by the originator. If additional time is required, provide justification to VHA DMO or Publications Control Officer (PCO) to approve an exception and state the time frame required.

c. No Transmittal Sheet is required for a temporary Directive.

d. Temporary Directives are numbered by the year and in the order in which they are published.

3. POLICY: The policy statement is a brief statement which gives Veterans Health Administration’s (VHA) policy on the subject. This statement sets the parameters of the Directive; i.e., It is VHA policy.....

4. ACTION: List responsibilities and brief action requirements. Lengthy procedures will be placed in an appendix.

5. REFERENCES: Cite any references pertaining to the subject or state “None”. Documents containing an expiration date may not be used as a reference.

6. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITY: This paragraph will list the title of the official under which the author wrote the Directive. This official is responsible for its update, recertification, and questions regarding the issue. For example: The Chief Patient Care Services (11/111A) is

responsible for the contents of this VHA Directive. Questions may be referred to the (list title or office, no names), and telephone number.

7. RESCISSION DATE: List any numbered administrative documents the present one rescinds. This VHA Directive expires (DMO will insert the last of the month, the month the Directive is issued, and 5 years hence).

Signature Block for the
Under Secretary for Health

DISTRIBUTION:

THIS VHA DIRECTIVE EXPIRES ON (DATE) (date to be assigned by DMO)
NOTE: The preceding statement is placed only on the bottom, centered of the first page.

SAMPLE OF FORMAT FOR DMS VHA APPENDIX

(Date)

VHA HANDBOOK 6330.01
APPENDIX A

HOW TO PREPARE APPENDICES

- 1. Appendix Header.** The words APPENDIX and then the alpha letter; e.g., A, B, etc., appear as the second line of the header under the type of documents and numerical identification.
- 2. Appendix Page Numbers.** All pages are numbered sequentially; e.g., A-1, A-2, or B-1, B-2, etc.; odd numbers on the bottom right side of pages; and even numbers on the bottom left side of pages (and always on the same side as the document identifier header).

Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Washington, DC 20420

VHA MEMORANDUM 10-20XX-XX

(Date)

SAMPLE OF VHA NUMBERED MEMORANDUM
(The title should be a brief descriptive heading all in caps.)

1. PURPOSE: This paragraph briefly states the reason for establishing this memorandum; e.g., “This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Memorandum establishes new VHA Central Office policy pertaining to . . .”

2. POLICY: State what VHA’s policy is in regard to the subject of the memorandum. This statement sets the parameters of the issue.

3. ACTION: This paragraph describes procedures, process, composition of committees, instructions, etc.

a. Numbered VHA Memoranda always contain five required paragraphs as shown in this sample: PURPOSE, POLICY, ACTION, RESPONSIBILITY, and RESCISSIONS. A sixth paragraph, REFERENCES, is optional.

b. Numbering contains the VHA identifier (10) for VHA Central Office, the calendar year, plus a numeric number in order. Numbers are assigned by the VHA Directives Management Officer (DMO) or Publications Control Officer (PCO).

c. Signature authority is the Under Secretary for Health.

4. REFERENCES: (OPTIONAL) An optional paragraph to cite references pertaining to the subject which may be affected by publication of this Memorandum.

5. RESPONSIBILITY: This paragraph will list the title the Chief, Director, or equivalent, with the routing symbol of the individual or division responsible for the memorandum’s update or recertification. For example: RESPONSIBILITY: The Chief Financial Officer (17) is responsible for the contents of this VHA Memorandum.

6. RESCISSIONS: (OPTIONAL) List any rescinding memorandum.

7. RESCISSION: This VHA Memorandum will expire (5 years or less).

Signature Block for the
Under Secretary for Health

Attachments (if any)

DISTRIBUTION: Only to VHA Central Office and VISNs.

SAMPLE OF VHA NOTICE

Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Washington, DC 20420

VHA NOTICE 2008-XX

(Date)

HOW TO PREPARE A VHA NOTICE

1. PURPOSE: A notice gives all Veterans Health Administration (VHA) employees important information involving, or of interest to, more than one administration or staff office, such as:

- a. A special event;
- b. A high-level personnel appointment or organizational change (replaces key staff memorandum announcements);
- c. The rescission of a policy document;
- d. A Request for Proposal; or
- e. Announcement of a new Award, etc.

2. TEXT: The notice should be short and to the point.

3. NUMBERING NOTICES: Because notices are used to make one-time announcements and rescinds after 4 years, they will not be identified using the “functional” numbering system. Notices will instead be identified by using VHA as the originating office's abbreviation followed by the word "NOTICE" with the calendar year and a sequential number. For example, VHA NOTICE 96-3, would be the third notice issued by VHA in calendar year 1996. The controlling VHA Central Office DMO will assign numbers to notices.

4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: The VHA XXX Service (mail routing code), is responsible for the contents in this VHA Notice. Questions may be addressed to 202-xxx-xxx.

Signature Block for the
Under Secretary for Health

DISTRIBUTION:

THIS VHA NOTICE EXPIRES ON (DATE) (date to be assigned by DMO for 4 years or less)

HOW TO PREPARE AN INFORMATION LETTER



**DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN AFFAIRS
Veterans Health Administration
Washington DC 20420**

IL 10-20XX-XX

In Reply Refer To: (insert routing symbol)

(Date)

**UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH'S INFORMATION LETTER
HOW TO PREPARE A VHA INFORMATION LETTER**

1. A numbered information letter (IL) is used to release non-directive information of one-time interest to only the field activities under the approving official's jurisdiction for a retention period of no more than 6 months.
2. Numbered ILs over the signature of the Under Secretary for Health are issued to release significant information which is of interest VHA nationwide. Other authorized approving officials are the Deputy Under Secretary for Health, Network Directors, Chiefs of Staff, Chief Officers or equivalent Directors.
3. This medium is not to be used to issue mandatory procedures.
4. This medium is not to be used to duplicate any information that has already been published in other forms of media; it may be referenced only.
5. Numbering. The identification for an information letters will begin with agency identifier "VHA," the information letter identifier "IL," followed by the identification numbers which consists of the approving officials routing symbol, the calendar year in which it is issued, and the numeric serial beginning with number one. The Directives Management Officer (DMO) assigns the numeric number and retains all history files.
6. An IL carries an automatic rescission date of no more than 6 months.

Signature Block for the
Under Secretary for Health

Attachments (if any)

DISTRIBUTION:

**PREPARATION OF VA FORM 10-2479, JUSTIFICATION FOR
PROPOSED VHA ISSUE**

1. Prepare one master original and make copy for your file.
2. Fill in block numbers 1 through 13.
 - a. **Block 1.** Type of document; i.e., VHA Handbook, Directive, Temporary Directive etc.
 - b. **Block 2.** Title (use the correct title).
 - c. **Block 3.** Briefly list purpose, discussion (background), and implications.
 - d. **Block 4.** List publications rescinded by this document; i.e., VHA Supplement, MP-1, Part II, Chapter 14.
 - e. **Block 5.** State the compelling reason why this document must be printed and distributed in hard copy; otherwise leave blank.
 - f. **Block 6.** Name of person to contact: Name of the originator or knowledgeable contact individual.
 - g. **Block 7.** Originating service and mail symbol.
 - h. **Block 8.** List the telephone number of the originator or contact individual.
 - i. **Blocks 9A, 10A.** Requires the signature of originating official and the service director.
 - j. **Blocks 11 and 12.** Concurrences. List all VHA offices that need to concur in the left hand columns and external concurrences in the right hand columns. Obtain the signatures of the concurring Chief Officers. Because these are most often received electronically through the document tracking system (WebCIMS), the office number, name or the person who signed the concurrence and the date may be typed or handwritten in these boxes.
 - k. **Block 13.** Controlled activities. Required signatures block:
 - (1) **Reports and Data Collection (19E1).** If a new report (recurring or nonrecurring) is requested and a new Reports Control Number (RCN) is to be assigned, 19E1 must concur in block 13, Control Activities, under Reports (19E1). Page 2 of VA Form 10-2479, Justification for Proposed VHA Issue, needs to be completed. Already established RCN numbered reports must have (19E1) concurrence who will verify their continued existence. The RCN block is assigned by 191B in block 13.

(2) **Forms and Records (19E1).** If a form or records management is referenced, 19E1 must concur in block 13, Control Activities under Forms and Records. If a Standard Form (SF) is part of the Directive it needs to be attached as a sample, unless the form is to be “reproduced locally” and is so identified on the form.

1. **Block 14.** Final Approval Process.

(1) **General Counsel (02).** If new policy is proposed, or legislation (Public Law) is being interpreted 02 must concur in block 14.

(2) **List the WebCIMS Number.** Preferably in the lower right and left corner.



VHA DOCUMENT CHECKLIST

1. Is the document in the correct format and proper font?
2. Are your margins, tabs, headers, and footers in correctly?
3. Did you identify the authority (i.e., Title 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) XXX, etc.)?
4. Is a copy of the authority in the backup? Are the copies of any rescinded documents in the backup?
5. Do the sentences make sense? Could any reader understand what the document is supposed to convey?
6. Are the paragraphs, subparagraphs, and appendices or attachments numbered correctly?
7. Are the pages numbered correctly?
8. Are the references correct and up-to-date? Are they cross-referenced correctly in the text?
9. For any document with a Table of Contents, do the paragraphs identified on the Contents page correspond with those in the text?
Are all page numbers correct?
10. Have you combined all appendixes, charts, diagrams, etc., into one word document? Transmittal sheet?
11. Did you run a spell check?
12. Is the document permanent or temporary?
13. Are the approving officials' titles correct (do not use personal names)?
14. Is your package complete with all the original documentation? Is backup material complete?
15. Are your concurrences complete, except for the Under Secretary for Health and the Deputy Under Secretary for Health?
16. After concurrences are complete, have you incorporated recommended changes? If you decline to accept recommended changes, the reason must be annotated on the recommending memo, with supporting information attached in the backup.
17. Have you saved the document after all track changes have been removed? **NOTE:** *Print and check.*
18. Have you included a completed VA Form 10-2479. **NOTE:** *The Under Secretary for Health sees this so it needs to be complete without the Under Secretary for Health having to look through all the back up concurrences. It needs the correct signatures in items 9a and 10a.*
19. Has the latest version of the completed word document been added to WebCIMS and labeled accordingly, and assigned to 19E1.
Due date needs to be 2 weeks at a minimum.
20. Have you written the WebCIMS number on VA Form 10-2479?
21. Did you hand carry the complete folder to 19E1?

HELPFUL HINTS AND DOs AND DON'Ts FOR WRITING VHA ISSUES
(subjects are in alphabetical order)

1. ABBREVIATIONS and/or ACRONYMS: Acronyms should follow the spelled-out version in parentheses the first time they occur; i.e., Veterans Health Administration (VHA); The Joint Commission (TJC), etc.

- a. **Do Not Abbreviate** Under Secretary for Health.
- b. **Do Not Abbreviate** Deputy Under Secretary for Health.
- c. **Do Not Abbreviate** VA medical center.

2. BULLETS: Do not use bullets in official numbered documents; they cannot be referenced. Use the correct subparagraph formatting as defined in paragraph 1 under Simple Formatting, MARGINS.

3. CAPITALIZATION: Only capitalize "medical center" when a specific medical center is being referenced; i.e., VA Medical Center, Palo Alto, CA. The term "medical centers" is not capitalized when referring to medical centers in general; i.e., Veterans receive health care at all VA medical centers.

4. CLOSE OF BUSINESS (COB) DATES: If the response date is not feasible (taking into consideration distribution and response times), a 19E1 staff member will call the originator and suggest a new date.

5. DATES and NAMES: Always write out month and year, do not abbreviate; i.e., January 3, 1996, or FY 1996. Do not divide a person's name or the month and day at the end of a line of text. Only the year or last name of an individual can be carried over to the next line.

6. DVA: Do not use DVA for Department of Veterans Affairs; use VA.

7. ENSURE or INSURE

- a. Ensure means to guarantee a service or action.
- b. Insure means to guarantee with money.

8. FOOTNOTE: Do not use footnotes; instead set off text which emphasizes a special point by setting it apart as a "**NOTE: Put text in italics.**" Another option is to add it as a reference, which can be referred to by subparagraph.

9. GENDER: In compliance to Civil Rights Act of 1976; Congress's changes to Title 38 removing all references to gender; Public Law 99-576 discouraging gender references; and VA Directive 6330, do not make reference to gender. The following terminology is recommended for use in DMS issues:

a. Whenever possible, the use of pronouns should be avoided when both sexes are involved. It is usually possible to rewrite without resorting to the use of singular their person pronouns. For example, do not use: “Each supervisor filled out his evaluation.” USE: “The supervisor filled out the employee's evaluation.”

b. Other gender-based terminology that is not related to a specific physical characteristic should be shown by the following examples:

(1) Chairperson instead of Chairman (the actual incumbent may prefer to be called Chairman or Chairwomen, only the position need be described neutrally).

(2) Surviving Spouse instead of widow or widower.

(3) Spouse, spouses, spouse's instead of wife, wives, or husband, husband's.

(4) Sibling or siblings instead of brother, sister.

(5) Child or children instead of daughter or son.

(6) Parent instead of mother or father.

(7) Married couple instead of husband and wife.

(8) Either parent instead of father or mother.

(9) Grandparents instead or grandfather or grandmother.

(10) Person, human, human being, living human instead of man, living man.

(11) Humanity, human beings, humankind instead of mankind.

(12) Per person instead of per man.

(13) Prudent individual, person instead of prudent man.

(14) Person, individual instead of female or male.

(15) Human resources instead of manpower.

(16) Artificial, of human origin, synthetic instead of manmade.

- (17) Trained work force instead of trained manpower.
 - (18) Services, service member, service members instead of serviceman, servicemen.
 - (19) Worker's compensation instead of workman's compensation.
- c. Avoid all gender-specific references; i.e., his, her, or he, she.

10. HOSPITAL: VHA facilities are no longer referred to as hospitals - use "medical center(s)" or facility(ies)." The only exception is when it is necessary to distinguish between hospital nursing home, domiciliary care or beds, or, between hospital versus outpatient care.

11. HYPHENS: Do not hyphenate words at the end of lines; rare exceptions can be made. Hyphenated-words can be used. For example: Non-service connected, non-VA hospital, long-term, full-time, and 3-year program.

12. INDENT: All indents will be five spaces from the left margin.

13. NUMBERS: Use numeric number when referring to time, money, or measurement. Example: "finish in 2 years;" "go for 5 yards;" hyphen when used as an adjective; i.e., "the scholarship is for a 4-year program."

14. PLEASE: Do not use "please" in an official numbered documents. "Please" is appropriate in correspondence, but not in official policy documents.

15. PUNCTUATION: The following spacing must be used in numbered documents:

- a. Only indent 5 spaces.
- b. Always insert 2 spaces after a period at the end of a sentence, or after number of a paragraph or subparagraph; i.e., 1. Is the beginning of the first paragraph. . . ; a. Is the beginning of a subparagraph. . . ; or (a) Is the beginning of a sub-subparagraph.

16. REFERENCES: Documents that contain an expiration date cannot be referenced in a permanent issue such as a Directives Management System (DMS) Directive or Handbook.

17. REFERENCES - HOW TO WRITE

a. **Title 38 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR).** This should be written the first time as Title 38 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Section 1.577(a), and thereafter as 38 CFR 1.5777(a). At the beginning of a sentence, always use "Title" 38 CFR 17.50b; never start a sentence with "38 CFR. . . .

b. **Title 38 United States Code.** This should be written out the first time it is referenced; i.e., Title 38 United State Code (U.S.C.) 5011; thereafter it should be written as 38 U.S.C. 5011

or 38 U.S.C. CH 15. **NOTE:** *Exception: When citing "authority," title may be eliminated. For example: Authority: 38 U.S.C. 5011.*

c. **Public Law.** This should be written out the first time it is reference; i.e., Public Law (Pub. L.) 87-693, thereafter it may be written as Pub. L. 87-693 (do not use P.L. which stands for Poet Laureate).

18. SLASHES: Slashes mean and/or; use only with and/or. For example VA/DOD Sharing Agreement. This is incorrect. Written this way it means VA and/or DOD Sharing Agreement. The correct way is VA-DOD Sharing Agreement.

19. STATES and Washington, DC: No periods; i.e., "DC" instead of "D.C." Use the two-letter abbreviation for all states.

20. STATION: Medical centers are not referred to as stations, but as facilities. "Station" is only used when referring to "station number."

21. TELEPHONE NUMBER: In accordance with the Government Printing Office (GPO) Manual, paragraph 8.55, telephone numbers written in official government documents will be hyphenated numbers; i.e., 202-565-7444. Do not use numbers separated by periods.

22. VA: Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) when written the first time. Use "the VA" only when VA is used as an adjective; e.g., The VA employee.... The same rule applies to the acronym VHA use "the VHA" only when VHA is used as an adjective; e.g., The VHA staff.

23. VA CENTRAL OFFICE: VHA uses VHA Central Office, unless reference to the entire VA; then it will be written out as VA Central Office.

24. VA FORM: No quotes or parentheses are used around VA Form titles or numbers. Always write out VA Form, do not use VAF. **NOTE:** *Titles of VA Forms may be found at: <http://vaww.va.gov/vaforms>.*

FOR HELP

Questions may be referred to 202-461-5862; 202-461-5867; or 202-461-5895.