VA Library Network

Intro to genAI and Prompt Engineering Demo

October 2025

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Digital Health Office

Library Services

- Who and How We Help
- Find Us and Digital Resources

genAI at the VA

- AI @ the VA
- What can I use?
- Prompt Engineering
- Assessing Outputs
- What are the current rules

Demo or Q&A

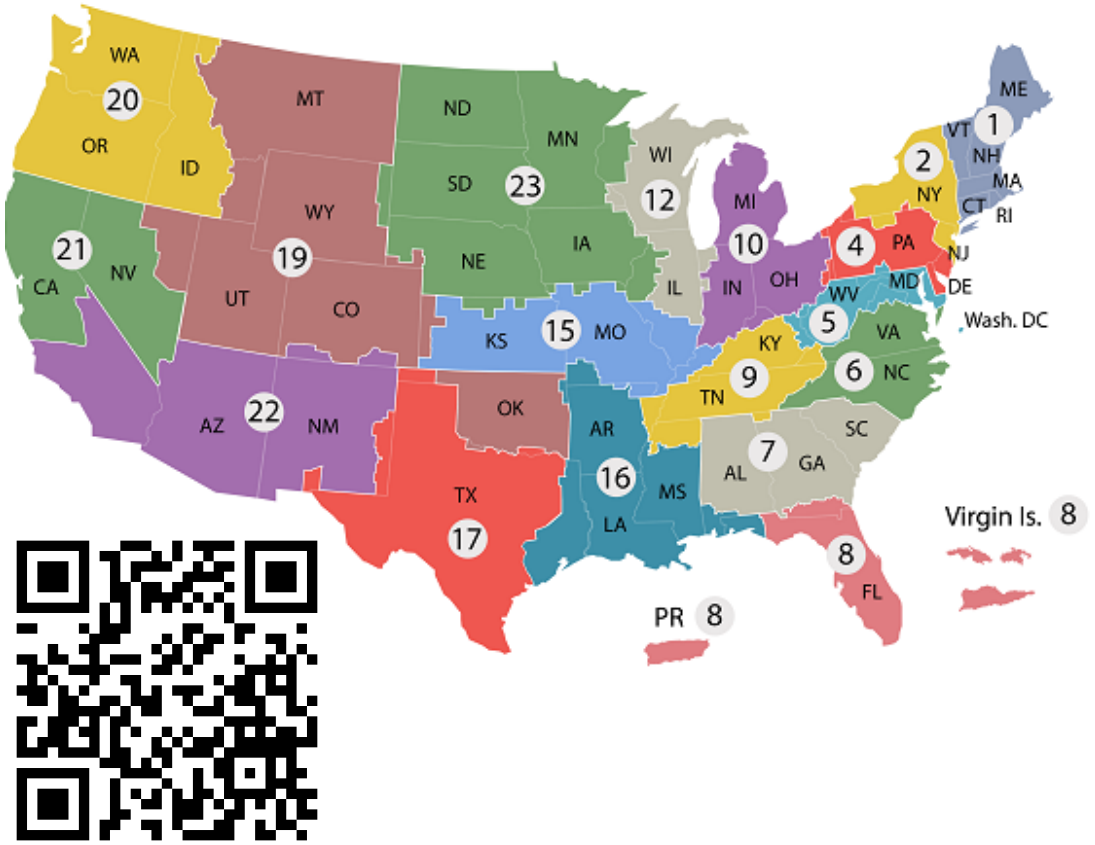
Find Your Librarians!

https://www.va.gov/LIBRARY/Find_Your_Library.asp

Facility staff: Find your librarian or another in your VISN

VHA National Desktop Library

https://www.va.gov/library/



How We Help

We're not just "books and shush!"

Ask Us Anything!

Access Information Tools

Partnerships & Trainings

Our Help

Advanced service that you **don't** get from a public library

We will **save you** time and energy!

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Digital Document Delivery

- Paywall Wrecking Ball!
- eAlerts (news and literature)
- PDFs of articles
- Interlibrary Loan

Literature Searches

- One-on-One Consultations
- Preliminary Search for Articles
- Further Consultation
- Comprehensive Search

?

VA

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration

Digital Health Office

The VA Innovation Unit

Chief AI Officer Team (Office of the Chief Technology Officer)

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- AI refers to computers performing tasks that typically require human intelligence.
- AI systems can quickly analyze vast amounts of data and streamline tasks.

- The VA can "…leverage AI to improve Veteran care, optimize resource allocation, and enhance predictive analytics to move towards preventive medicine..."

Types of Artificial Intelligence

…tasks that typically require human intelligence…

Machine Learning

Generative AI "genAI"

Natural Language Processing

Rules and Current Guidance

Joint Information Bulletin (Maintained by OCTO and NAII)

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[Current Guidance for Generative AI Models at VA | Office of Information and Technology]

[https://vaww.oit.va.gov/current-guidance-for-generative-ai-models-at-va/]

- No web-based, publicly available generative AI service has been approved for use with VA-sensitive data.
- No PII, PHI, Veterans data nor VA-sensitive data should be entered into unapproved services. **EVER**. **NEVER**.
- Where possible, limit the sharing and saving of data in unapproved services.
- VA staff should carefully evaluate the output of any LLM tool for accuracy before using the output in VA work.

What can I use?

Whatever pops up and isn't blocked! Allowed ≠ Approved!

New genAI products are launched every week. It's impossible for VA to vet them all. The Big Four:

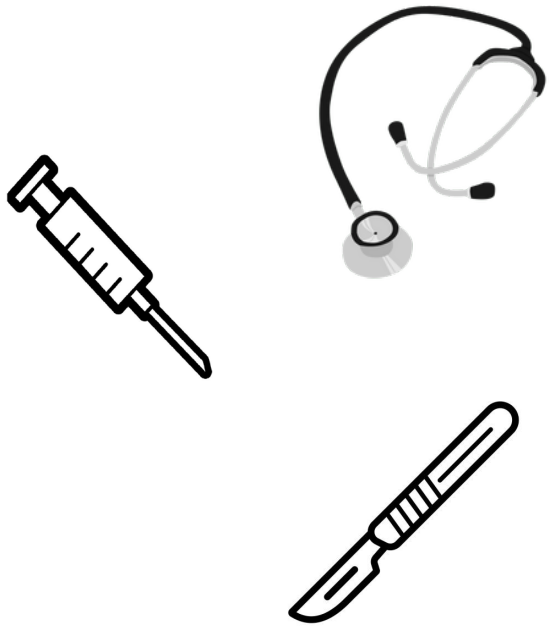
Approved:

- VA GPT
- VA Copilot

Allowed:

- Perplexity.ai
- OpenEvidence.com

Which tool?
When?
How?



Does the tool give sources? Where does it get its info from? Who made it? Does it cost?

Librarians emphasize the need to critically **assess the outputs** and practice good information literacy skills!

VA GPT (Approved by VA!)

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Now allows limited document upload (as of Sept 2025)

Designed for Privacy

- Secure log-in with your **VA credentials**
- Approved for **handling** VA data, including PII and PHI
- Up to 20 PDF files (10MB max) can be uploaded at a time
- Does not include live web data or external weblinks to sources:
  - *Web search* is disabled (no live web searches)
  - *Web grounding* is disabled (data current as of October 2023)

Enhance Efficiency

- *Save Time:* Streamline writing, research, and analysis
- *Boost Creativity:* Generate new ideas and solutions
- *Consistent Output:* Reformat notes and draft presentations quickly

VA GPT Sign Up

Microsoft 365 Copilot Chat

The latest AI tool available to VA employees (July 2025)

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Microsoft 365 CoPilot

- Integrates with Microsoft 365 apps (Word, Excel, etc.)
- Availability VA-wide will be announced at a future date
- *Learn more: What is Microsoft 365 CoPilot & Microsoft 365 CoPilot Chat*

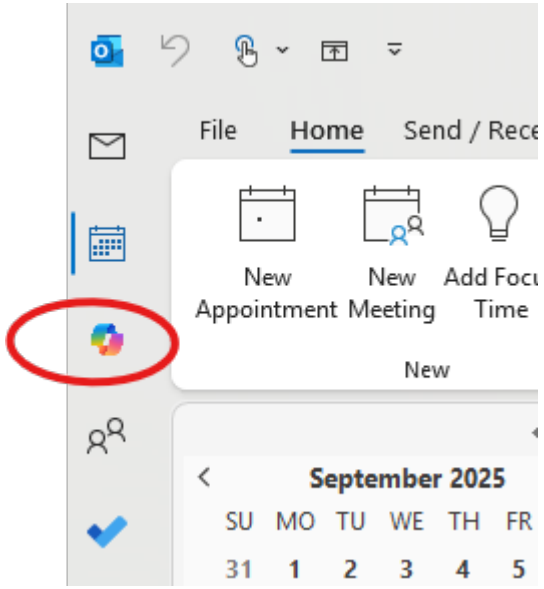
M365 Copilot Chat

CoPilot Chat

- Available to all VA employees
- Basic AI assistance without full app integration

  Features:

  - Approved for sensitive PHI/PII data
  - Allows document upload: limited to 3 files/day
  - No web links or web search results



Now linked from inside Outlook! (Sept 2025)

Skill to Develop: "Prompt Engineering"

The skill of prompting the chatbot to **generate** what **you want**

Just like an “Advanced Search” prompt it what to include and what to exclude. Tell it:

1. **Its task**
2. **The context**
3. **Some content**

A *chatbot* generates what **you want:**

tell it what you want done and "chit-chat" back and forth until you get what you actually want!

It can't read your mind—

tell it your end goal!

- Who it is and what role it is playing
- What your final format needs to look like
- Who you are and who will read your work
- Tell it you are an expert at the VA
- Explain what you know and have done
- Ask it for recommendations on what to do
- Feedback on what it is doing. It understands “thanks” and “you’re wrong”
- Do you want it to pull info from a certain website? Only .gov sites? Only va.gov?

Skill to Develop: "Assessing Outputs"

Human Intelligence must check for errors or *hallucinations*

What to Check	Why it matters	How to do it
Factual Accuracy	Prevents sharing false info	Check facts with trusted sources, cite evidence
Relevance to the Task	Saves time, ensures usefulness	Compare output with original question or task
Bias and Fairness	Avoids harm, supports inclusivity	Check for stereotypes, missing perspectives
Source Transparency	Supports trust, enables review	Ask for sources, cross-reference unusual claims
Clarity/readability	Helps understanding for all users	Simplify language, organize results logically
Limitations and Uncertainty	Prevents over-reliance on AI	Identify guesses, note when info is missing/incomplete

Search Chatbots (Allowed by VA)

Weblinks to online sources is the Librarian's Gold Standard

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Perplexity

https://www.perplexity.ai

- Searches and explains results
- Converses about topics
- Paraphrases external content

Elicit

https://elicit.com

- Synthesizes academic literature
- Emphasizes evidence-based outputs
- Automates research tasks

OpenEvidence

https://www.openevidence.com/

- Clinical genAI
- Streamlines evidence synthesis
- Provides links to PubMed
- From the Mayo Clinic and New England Journal of Medicine
- NOT a Point-of-Care tool!

Practical Applications

Reduce workload and increase efficiency

Streamlining Routine Tasks	Drafting emails, generating responses, formatting for notes and presentations, analyze sentiment or tone in a document, rewrite a short document in a particular style
Creativity and Efficiency	Generating new ideas and solutions, document creation, summarizing reports, compare and contrast documents, translate documents into another language
Finding Information	Crafting prompts for more optimal results, generate starting keywords or subject terms, locating research, directives, etc., pull out relevant quotes from a document
Boosting Research Efforts	Data analysis, generating summaries, verifying accuracy and relevance of AI-generated content (with human oversight)

Using VA GPT or Copilot -- at Work

Common Tasks from Demo Sessions

Draft my Performance Review	Provide your performance elements; freely type what you remember...
Project Planning Dole Act Implementation	VBA's Implementation of Sec 212; provide background pages, request a project plan, timelines, draft meeting agendas and invites...
Finding Broken Links	A staffer monitors Sharepoints for broken links and missing files. VA GPT identified the "PowerShell" software and crafted a curriculum to learn it...
Contract Justification Memos	Providing the questions that need to be answered; links to the products; free-form information ("data dump") of your use cases...

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