

Overview of VA Data

VHA Nursing Research Field Advisory Committee Call
May 21, 2015

Presented by:

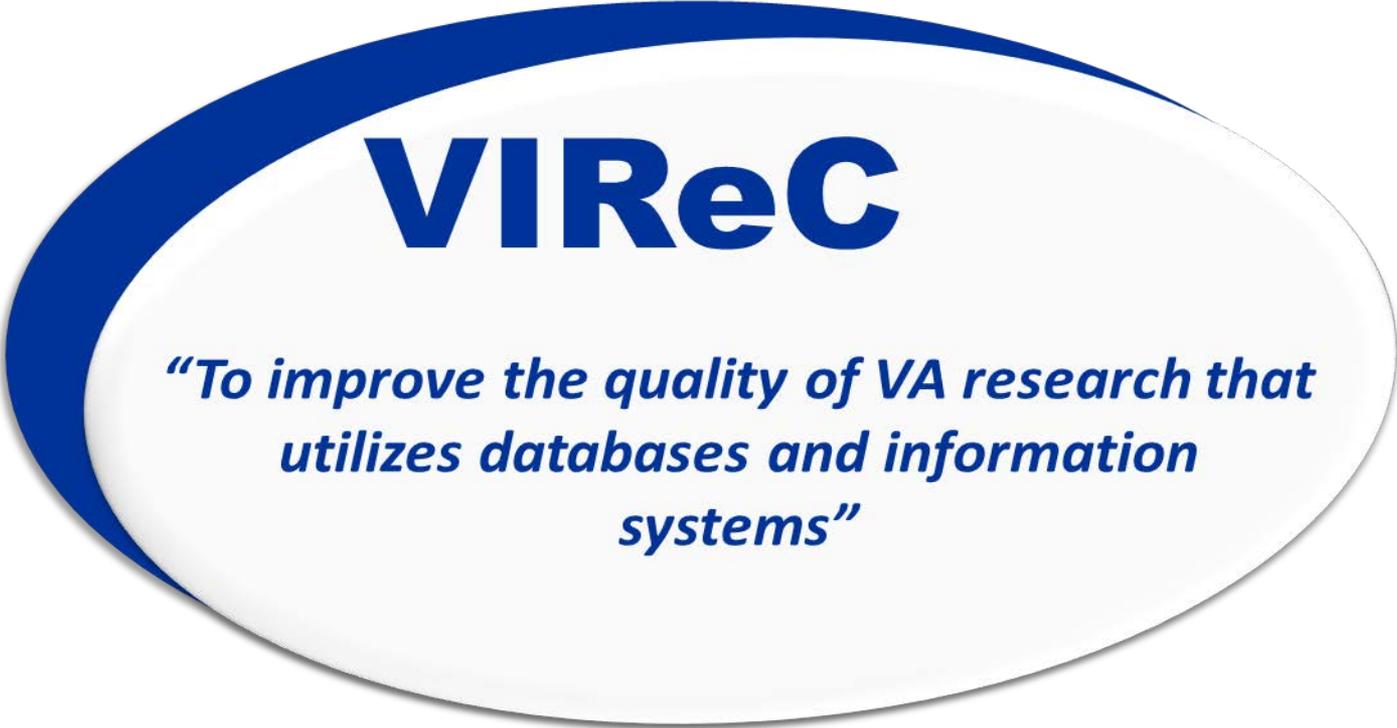
Denise M. Hynes, MPH, PhD, RN
Center Director, VIREC

Linda Kok, MA
Technical & Privacy Liaison, VIREC

Instructions

- 1. Describe the different VA databases available for clinicians and researchers and what information is contained in these different databases.**
- 2. Describe access processes including rules and requirements for their use.**

VA Information Resource Center



VIREC

*“To improve the quality of VA research that
utilizes databases and information
systems”*

www.virec.research.va.gov



The Researcher's Guide to VA Data

VA Information Resource Center

VIREC Home

About Us

▶ VIREC Resources

Support

▶ Research in the VA

▶ VHA Links

Search VIREC's Site

Go

VA Health Services Research & Development Service

HSR&D

Information
for
Veterans



Assisting VA Researchers

Education

Publications

Assisting VA Researchers

VIREC provides guidance essential for helping VA researchers use data and information systems.

[Learn more »](#)

Welcome to our new Internet website.

Looking for VIREC's resources for VA researchers? Visit our Intranet site. [Learn more...](#)

Who We Are

VIREC is an HSR&D funded resource center. Our mission is to improve the quality of VA research that utilizes databases and information systems.

What We Do

VIREC conducts research and collaborates with experts in the field to create a knowledge base of factual and evaluative information. VIREC shares this knowledge with

Upcoming Events

October 6: Overview of VA Data, Information Systems, National Databases and Research Uses

October 21: [Developing a Chemotherapy Ordering Management](#)

What VIREC Does

- **Creates a knowledge base of factual and evaluative information about data.**
- **Shares knowledge with VA researchers.**
 - **Intranet website**
 - **VHA Data Portal (collaboration with NDS, VINCI and Data Quality)**
 - **Cyberseminars (hosted by CIDER/HSR&D)**
 - **Tutorials and documentation**
 - **HelpDesk (virec@va.gov)**

Topics for Today

- **Overview of VA data sources and databases**
- Data processing platforms and EHR (read- only) access portals
- Policies governing data access
- Where to go for more help

Common Sources of VA and VHA Data

Administrative /
Operations Data

Financial
Recordkeeping

Clinical Care /
Patient Records
Data

Veteran
Population
Surveys

Data from Other
Agencies

Performance
Measurement
Data

Overview: Levels of Data

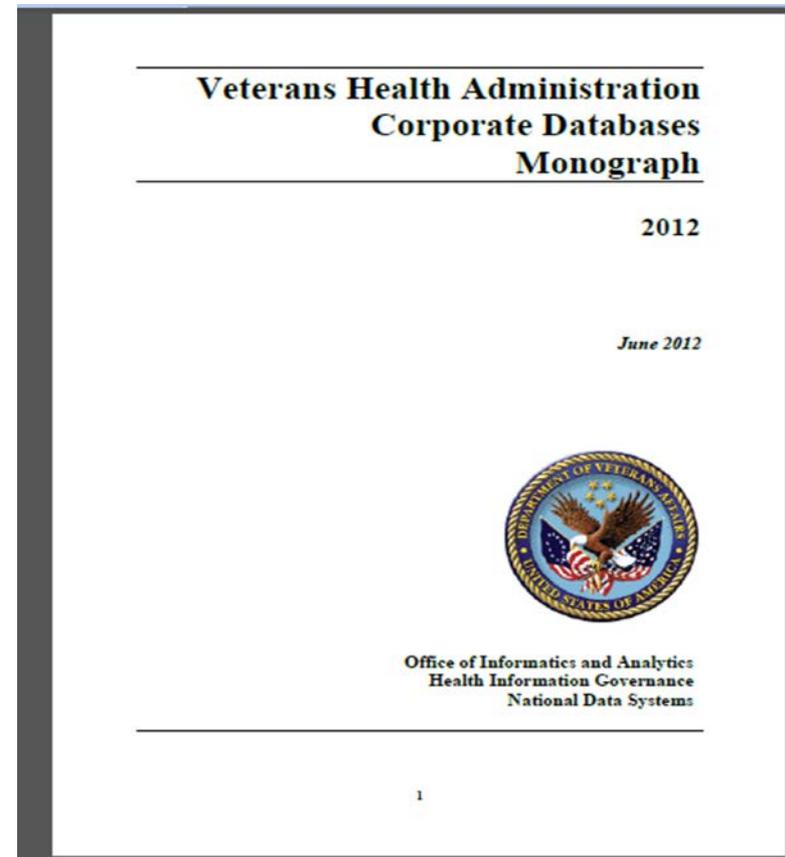
- Local facility data
- VISN level data
- Corporate (national) level

Orienting to VA Data

- **A few resources that will help you get an overview of VA data and how to use it...**

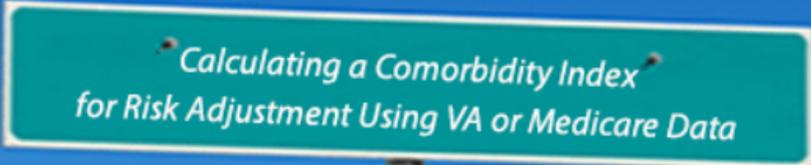
VHA Corporate Databases Monograph

- Produced by Office of Informatics and Analytics (OIA), National Data Systems
 - Includes 139 databases and information systems
 - Available via VHA Data Portal



VA INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER (VIReC)

- [VIReC Home](#)
- [VA/CMS Home](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [New Users of VA Data](#)
- [Data Transition to CDW](#)
- [News & Updates](#)
- [FAQs](#)
- [Acronyms](#)
- [HelpDesk](#)



Learn about calculating a comorbidity index for use as a risk adjustment in observational healthcare studies. [More...](#)

- [Data Issues Brief, August 2014](#)
- [Upcoming Cyberseminar](#)
- [New: Risk Adjustment Tutorial](#)**
- [Real SSN Data Request Process](#)
- [VA REDCap Project](#)

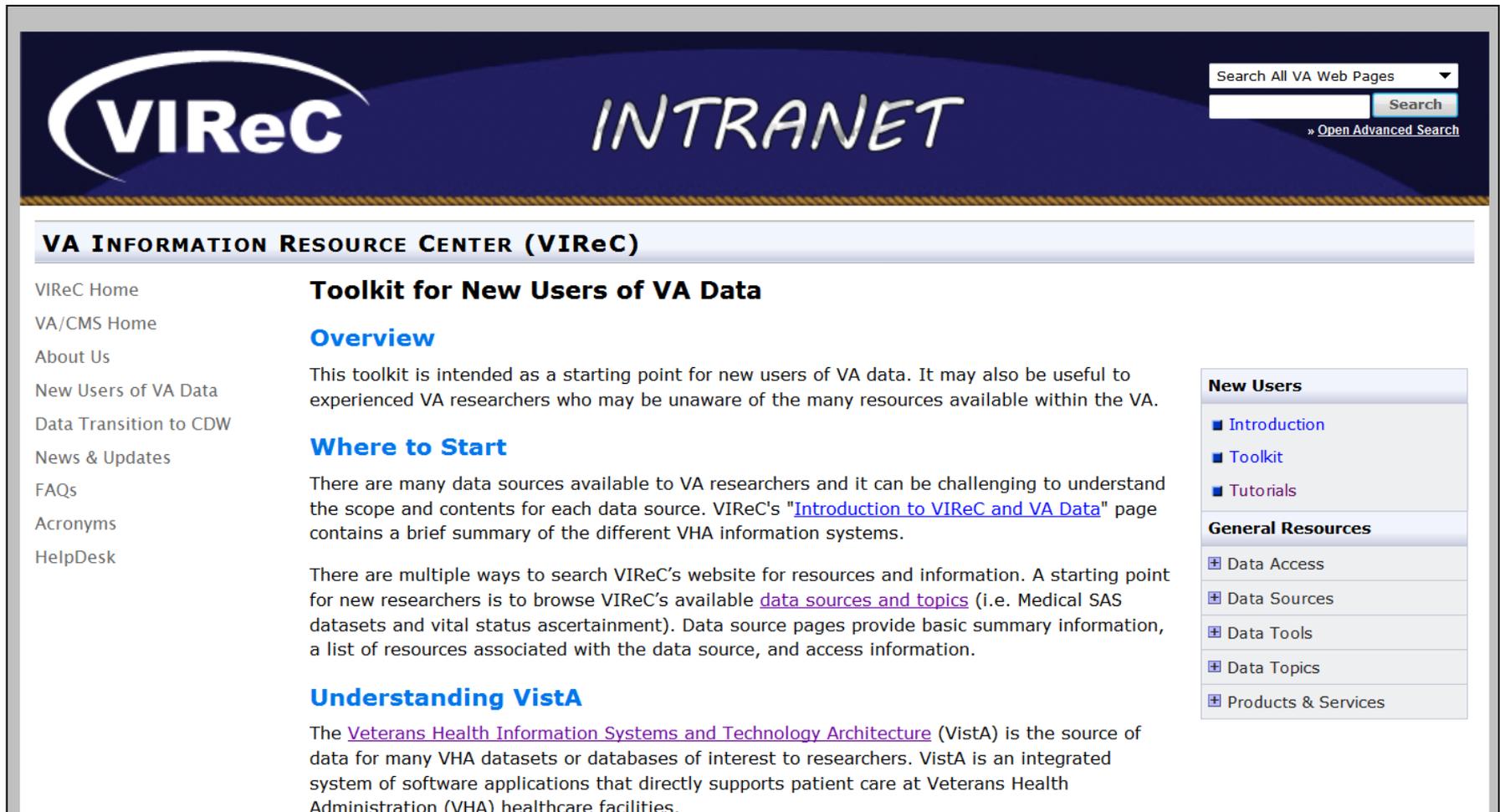
At a Glance

- [How VIReC Can Help](#): Introduction to resources VIReC develops for researchers using VA data.
- [Data Issues Brief](#): News and updates about VA data and information systems.
- [HSRData-L Listserv](#): Virtual community of VA researchers sharing knowledge about VA data and database use.
- [VA/CMS Data for Research Project](#): VIReC serves as the data custodian for Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) data for research use in the VA.
- [Journal Supplements](#): Collaborations with peer reviewed journals on VA data and informatics research topics.

Resources for Researchers

- [Data Sources & Data Topics](#): Select a specific data source or data topic described by VIReC.
- [Research User Guides](#): Detailed descriptions of select VA data sources, including variable descriptions.
- [Data Reports](#): Technical reports, data investigations, and data quality updates.
- [Summary Information](#): Current and historical information about dataset variables, counts, frequencies, and more.
- [Publications](#): A complete list of peer reviewed articles and journal supplements published by VIReC.
- [VHA Data Portal](#): A one-stop-shop for information about VHA data including details on requesting data access.

Toolkit for New Users of VA Data



The screenshot shows the VIREc INTRANET website. At the top left is the VIREc logo. To the right is a search bar with the text 'Search All VA Web Pages' and a 'Search' button. Below the search bar is a link to 'Open Advanced Search'. The main header reads 'VA INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER (VIREc)'. The left sidebar contains a navigation menu with links: VIREc Home, VA/CMS Home, About Us, New Users of VA Data, Data Transition to CDW, News & Updates, FAQs, Acronyms, and HelpDesk. The main content area features the title 'Toolkit for New Users of VA Data' and an 'Overview' section. The 'Overview' text states: 'This toolkit is intended as a starting point for new users of VA data. It may also be useful to experienced VA researchers who may be unaware of the many resources available within the VA.' Below this is a 'Where to Start' section with the text: 'There are many data sources available to VA researchers and it can be challenging to understand the scope and contents for each data source. VIREc's "Introduction to VIREc and VA Data" page contains a brief summary of the different VHA information systems.' This is followed by another paragraph: 'There are multiple ways to search VIREc's website for resources and information. A starting point for new researchers is to browse VIREc's available [data sources and topics](#) (i.e. Medical SAS datasets and vital status ascertainment). Data source pages provide basic summary information, a list of resources associated with the data source, and access information.' The final section is 'Understanding VistA', which states: 'The [Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture](#) (VistA) is the source of data for many VHA datasets or databases of interest to researchers. VistA is an integrated system of software applications that directly supports patient care at Veterans Health Administration (VHA) healthcare facilities.' On the right side of the page, there is a 'New Users' section with links for 'Introduction', 'Toolkit', and 'Tutorials'. Below that is a 'General Resources' section with expandable links for 'Data Access', 'Data Sources', 'Data Tools', 'Data Topics', and 'Products & Services'.

The VHA Data Portal...

- Links to multiple data resources
- Information about how to apply for access to data
- Pointers to data documentation pages

**Department of Veterans Affairs
VHA Data Portal**

Home Data Sources Data Access Tools Resources Training About Us Support

Welcome to the VHA Data Portal!

The one-stop-shop for data users' needs.

The VHA Data Portal is a collaborative effort among the following to provide a central gateway to information about VHA data:

- **VHA National Data Systems (NDS)**
- **VA Information Resource Center (VIReC)**
- **VA Informatics and Computing Infrastructure**
- **VHA Data Quality Program**

Our mission is to promote a knowledge-sharing culture that supports VHA data users. The portal integrates information from multiple common format and single location to promote a comprehensive and to facilitate a positive end-user experience.

Data Sources Overview

- AITC Mainframe
- BIRLS Death File
- CDW
- MCA (formerly DSS) NDEs
- MCA (formerly DSS) Web Reports
- Medical SAS Inpatient & Outpatient Data Sets
- NPCD
- OEF/OIF/OND Roster
- PTF
- VA/CMS Data
- VETSNET
- Vital Status File
- VSSC Web Reports

RESOURCES:
Browse the Resources Overview to learn more about resources available to data users

News

Change in Real SSN Research Data Request Process

ORD has instituted a change in the approval process for researchers' requests for data with real SSNs. New and pending DART requests will be required to submit the [Real SSN Access Request form](#). Visit the [Real SSN Data Request Process](#) page on VIReC's website for information on the new procedures and how they might affect your research project.

Upcoming Events

VIReC Cyberseminars

September 16: [IVR-Based Cognitive Behavior Therapy for Chronic Low Back Pain](#)

October 6: [Overview of VA Data, Information Systems, National Databases and Research Uses](#)

VINCI Happy Hour - 3rd Wednesday Every Month at 1PM MT

VINCI in its continuing efforts to assist VHA data

Popular Links

Data Access

- [DART Overview and Forms](#)
- [Launch DART Application](#)

Resources

- [Corporate Databases Monograph](#)
- [DAR](#)
- [HSRData-L Listserv](#)

VA Databases and Data Sources

VA Inpatient
and Outpatient
Data (MedSAS)

VA CMS Data
for Research

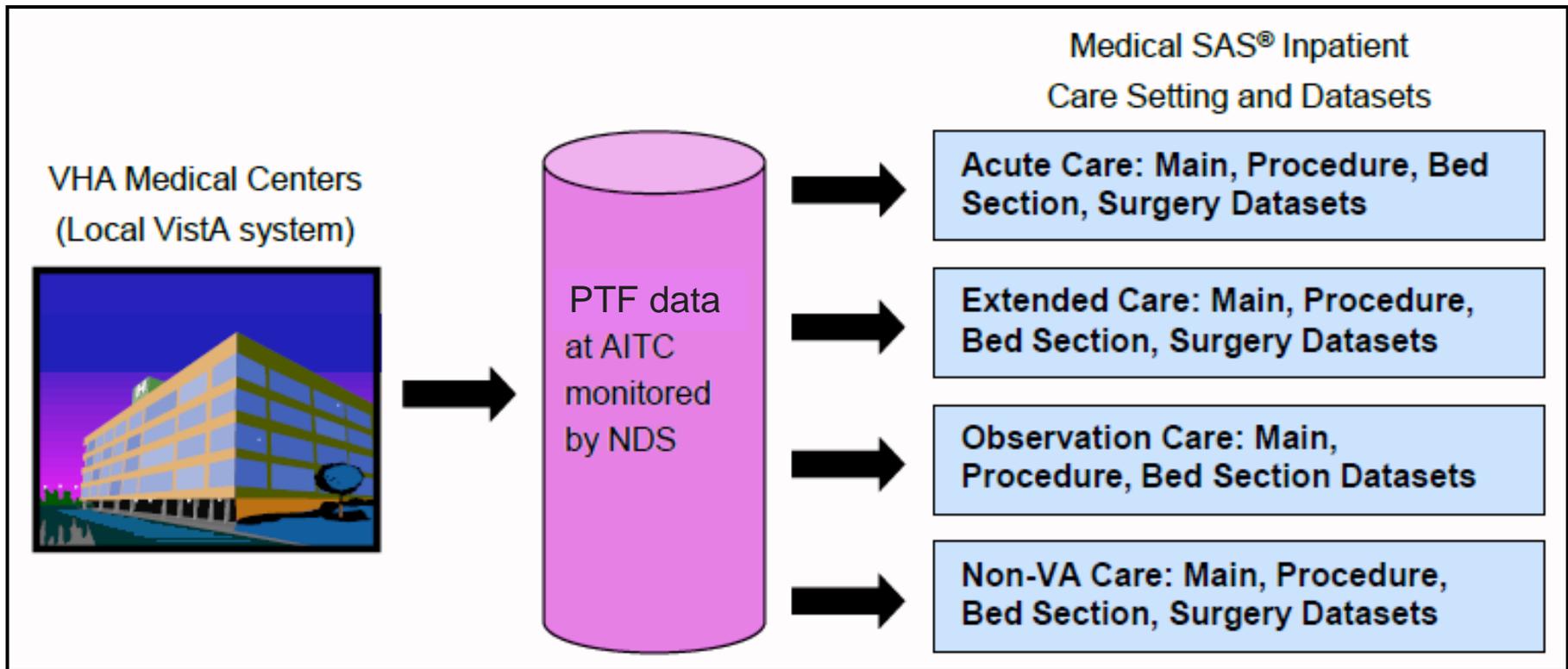
VA DSS
National Clinical
Data

VA Vital Status
File

VA Pharmacy
Data

VA Corporate
Data Warehouse
Data

MedSAS Inpatient, Overview



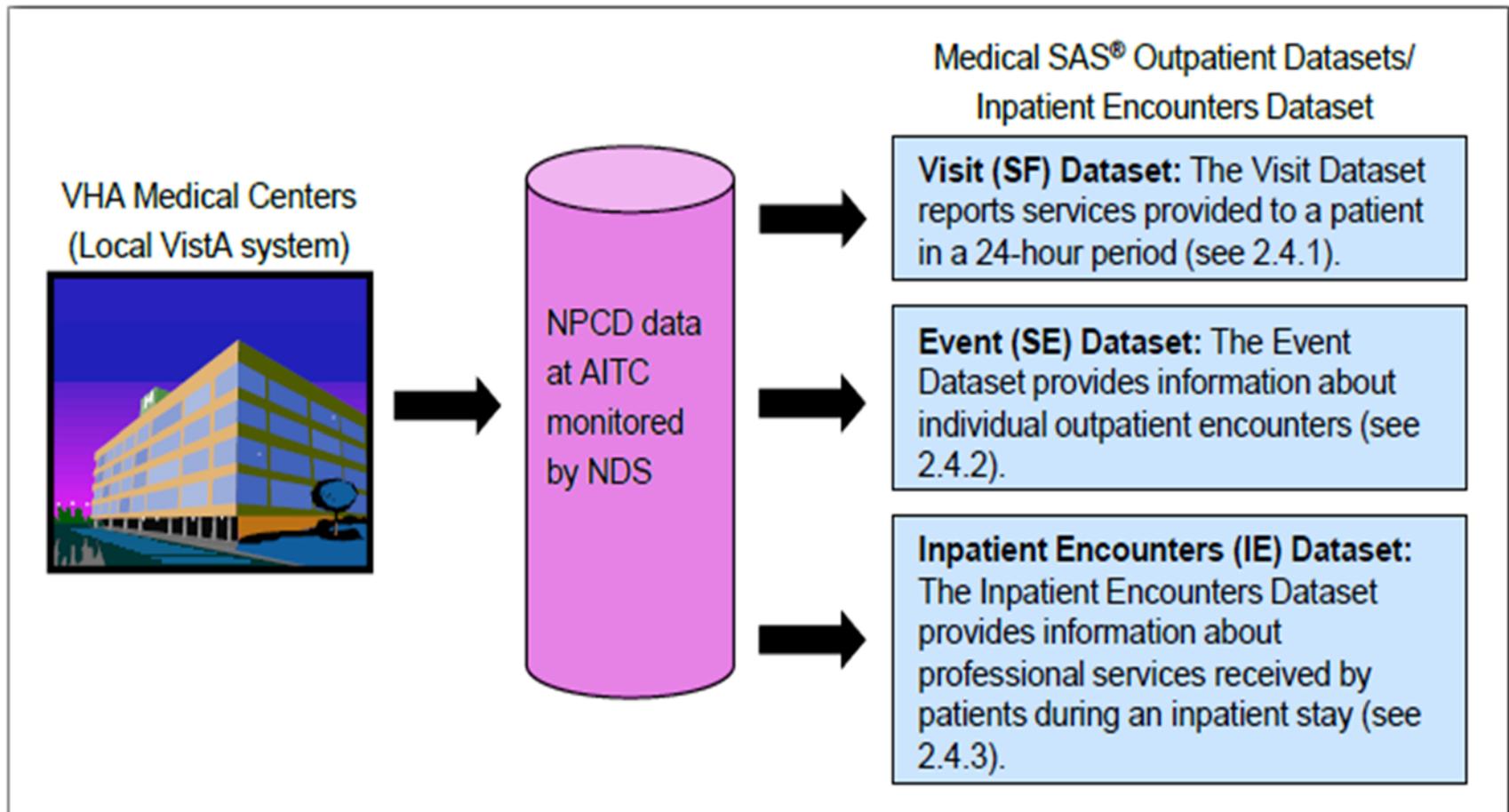
Patient Treatment File (PTF)
 Austin Information Technology Center (AITC)
 National Data Systems (NDS)

MedSAS Inpatient Data

- Data element examples
 - Patient demographics
 - ICD-9 procedure/ surgery codes
 - ICD-9 diagnosis codes
- Data steward:
 - National Data Systems (NDS)
- More information: MedSAS Research User's Guide on the VIREC Intranet



MedSAS Outpatient, Overview



MedSAS Outpatient Data

- **Data element examples:**
 - Patient demographics
 - CPT4 procedure codes
 - ICD-9 diagnosis codes
- **Data steward:**
 - National Data Systems (NDS)
- **More information: MedSAS Research User's Guide on the VIREC Intranet**



VA Managerial Cost Accounting (MCA) System National Data Extracts (NDEs)

List of NDEs


Department of Veterans Affairs
VHA Data Portal
Home Data Sources Data Access Tools Resources Training About Us Support

Data Sources > MCA (formerly DSS) NDEs

Quick View

MCA NDEs contain workload, clinical, and financial data at the patient level.

MCA NDEs

- Overview
- Content
- Features
- Access
- Resources

VHA MCA (formerly DSS) National Data Extracts (NDEs)

Overview

VA's Managerial Cost Accounting (MCA) System (formerly Decision Support System or DSS) contains fiscal data and clinical information. MCA (formerly DSS) National Data Extracts (NDEs) data originates from various site-level MCA databases and subsystems. NDEs are classified as Core, Clinical, Financial, or Program Activity.

MCA NDEs from fiscal year (FY) 2005 through the current year are now in the [Corporate Data Warehouse \(CDW\)](#) in SQL tables. MCA NDE SAS data sets for all fiscal years were removed from the [Austin Information Technology Center \(AITC\) Mainframe](#) in March 2013. These MCA NDE legacy SAS data sets for fiscal year (FY) 2000-2012 are available on request.

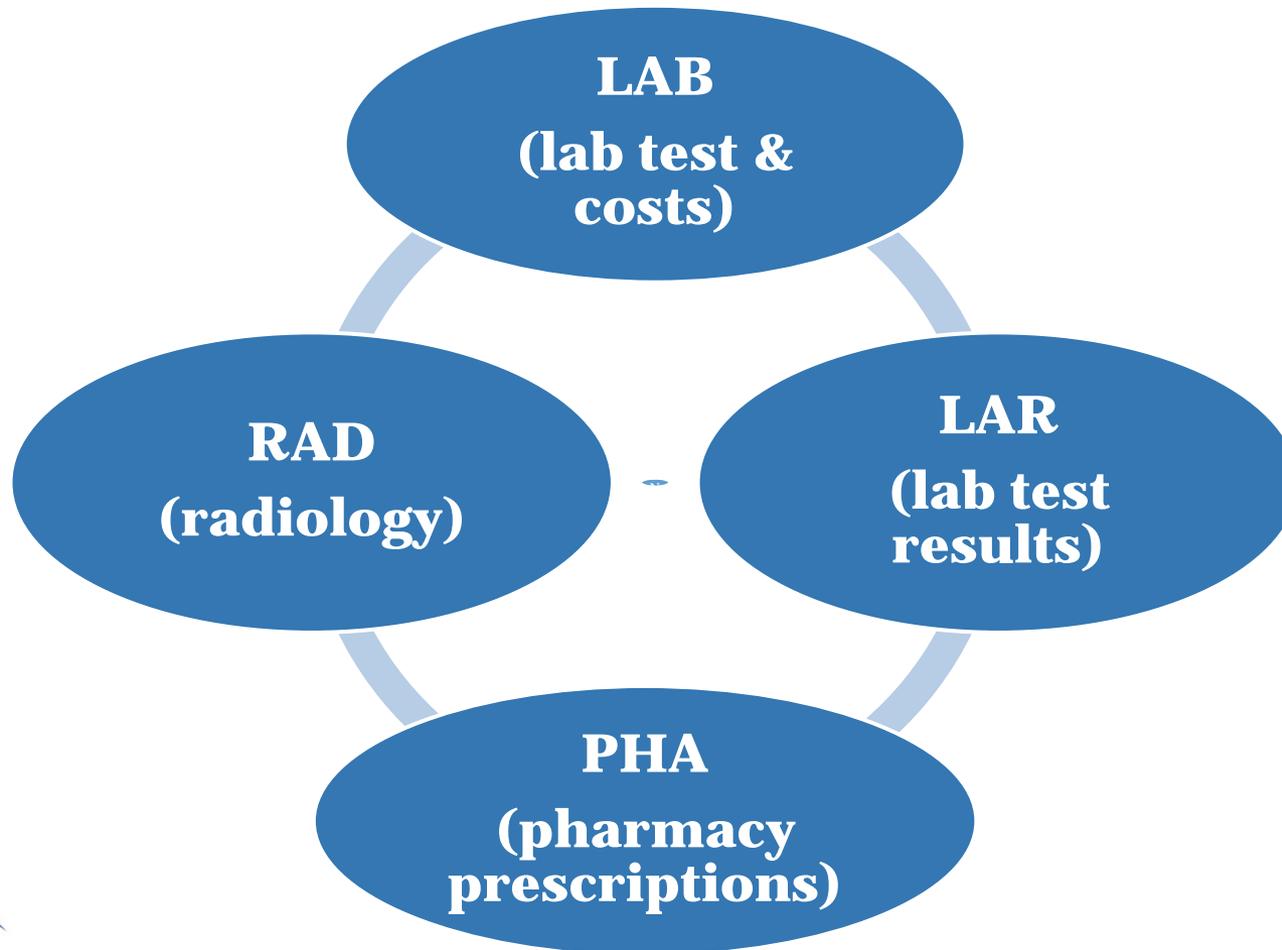
Note: Although DSS is now known as MCA, the SQL tables for the MCA NDEs within CDW are under a DSS Schema and still use the DSS name (Example: Dss.ALBCC). Supporting documentation on the CDW website also still uses the DSS name.

Content

NDEs provide workload, clinical, and fiscal data for each patient at the product, encounter, sub-encounter, or department levels. [Hide MCA NDE names and descriptions.](#)

CDW NDE Table	Name	Description
ALBCC	Account Level Budgeter	Financial reporting extract including data on labor hours and costs within each MCA direct care department.
ALBHR	Account Level Budgeter Hours	No longer active, combined with ALB NDE in FY09.
		Admissions, discharges and beddays of care for each patient/attending physician

VA MCA (formerly DSS) NDE - Clinical Data



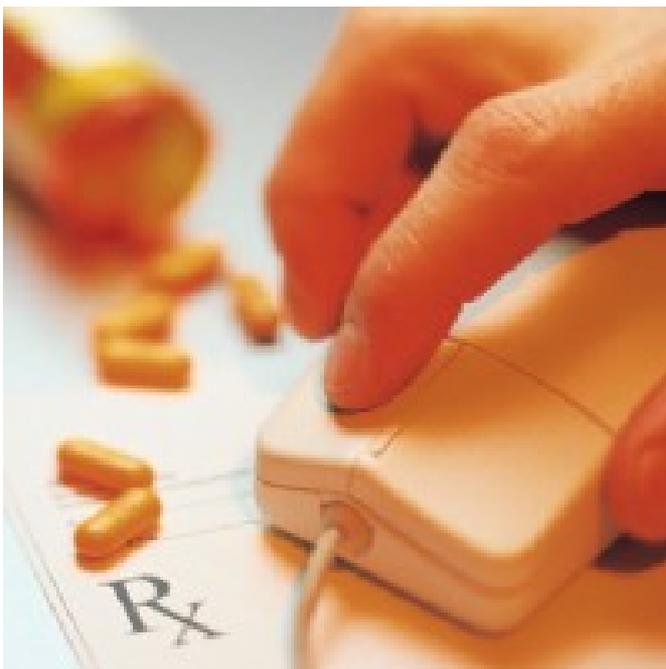
VA MCA National Clinical Data

- **Data Element Examples:**
 - Date
 - Test results
 - Ordering provider
 - Costs
- **Data Steward:**
 - **VHA Managerial Cost Accounting Office (MCAO)**
- **More information: Research User Guide: VHA Decision Support System Clinical Data Extracts, 2nd Edition (VIReC Intranet)**



VA Pharmacy Data

- Medications dispensed from VA pharmacies



Three Sources

- Pharmacy Benefits Management (PBM)
- VHA Managerial Cost Accounting (MCA) NDE
- CDW Bar Code Medication Administration (BCMA) /Outpatient Pharmacy Domains

VA Pharmacy Data

- **Data element examples:**
 - Generic drug name, days supply, VA drug class, Cost etc.
- **Data Steward**
 - PBM: Fran Cunningham, PharmD
 - MCAO: Managerial Cost Accounting Service
 - NDS: National Data Systems
- **More information: VIREC Research User Guide: VHA Pharmacy Prescription Data, 2nd Edition**

VA Vital Status File

- **Multiple sources of mortality information**
 - **VA Workload Data**
 - **BIRLS Death File**
 - **Medicare Vital Status File**
 - **SSA Death Master File**
- **Two files: Master and Mini**

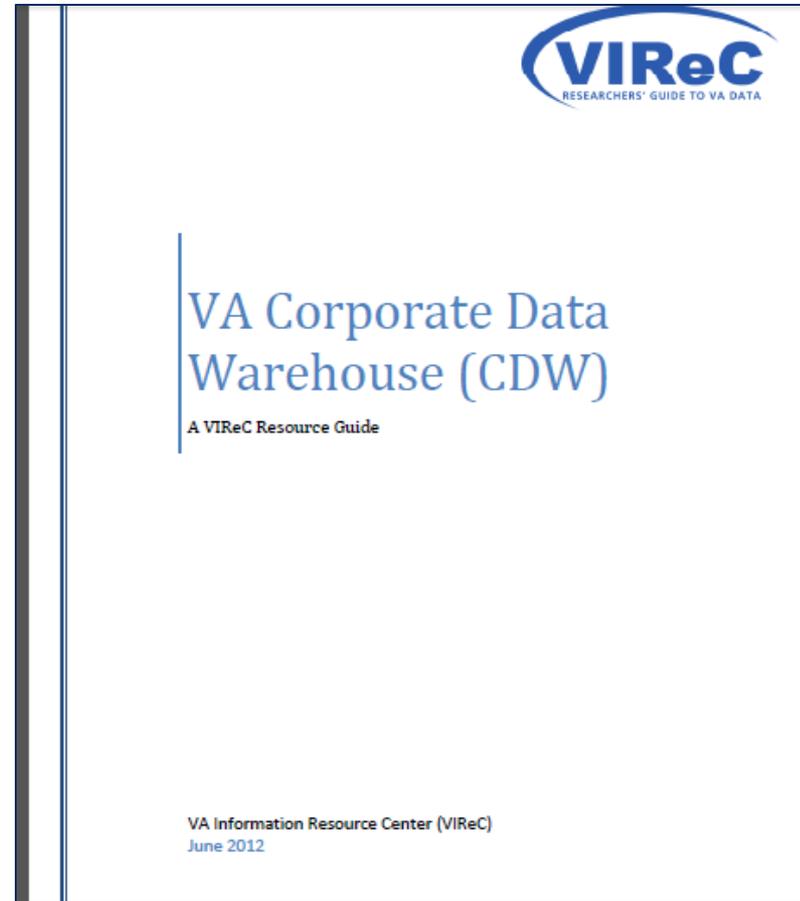
VA Vital Status File

- Data element examples:
 - Date of death (variables from the different sources and value selected as “best”)
 - Last healthcare utilization date
- Data Steward:
 - National Data Systems
- More information: “Vital Status Overview” page on VIREC Intranet



Corporate Data Warehouse Data

- National repository of VHA administrative and clinical data
- Relational database organized into data domains
- Data available from 1999 to present



Corporate Data Warehouse Data

- **CDW Domain Examples**
 - Patient
 - Staff
 - Vital Signs
 - Allergies
 - Immunization
 - Health Factors
 - Lab Chemistry
 - Pharmacy Outpatient
- **Data Steward:**
 - National Data Systems
- **For more information:**
 - VIREC Intranet
 - CDW SharePoint
 - VINCI data descriptions

VA/Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Data

Contain data on services received outside the VA and paid for by Medicare or Medicaid

Medicare enrollment and claims data

Medicaid enrollment and claims data

Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey (MCBS)

Long Term Care Patient Assessment Data

United States Renal Data System (USRDS)

VA/Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Data

- **Data element examples:**
 - Medicare and Medicaid enrollment
 - ICD-9 and CPT4 procedure codes
 - ICD-9 diagnosis codes
 - Charges and payments
- **Data steward:**
 - [VIReC's VA/CMS Data for Research Project](#)
- **For more information**
 - [VIReC Intranet-VA/CMS Data for Research Home Page](#)

Topics for Today

- Overview of VA data sources and databases
- **Data processing platforms and EHR (read-only) access portals**
- Policies governing data access
- Where to go for more help

Processing Platforms

- **Austin Information Technology Center Mainframe (AITC)**
 - Centralized computer processing center under VA Office of Information and Technology (OI+T)
 - For more information: VIREC Intranet or VHA Data Portal
- **VINCI**
 - Secure computing environment for VA researchers
 - For more information: VINCI Central site

EHR Data Portals - Compensation & Pension Data Interchange (CAPRI) & VistAWeb

CAPRI

Requires special software and access/verify codes

Data viewed from one healthcare site at a time

Includes search function

Direct access to VistAWeb

Both

Read-only access to EHR one patient at a time

Require real SSN

Approval for one, many, or all VA sites

Submit requests to DART

VistAWeb

VA Intranet web portal accessed through local VistA

Data consolidated from all sites in single chronological view

VistA Imaging available

Topics for Today

- Overview of VA data sources and databases
- Data processing platforms and EHR (read-only) access portals
- **Policies governing data access**
- Where to go for more help

Criteria for Use of VA Data in Research

- **Employment status**
- **Proposed use**
- **Data Steward requirements**
- **Sensitivity of data**
- **Physical location of data**

Approval for Research Data Access is Multi-Departmental

VHA Local
Management

CUPS* Point of
Contact or ISO

Data Steward

VIReC on behalf
of VHA ORD
(Real SSN)

VHA Privacy
Office

VHA Security
Liaison Office

Data access for research

- General requirements include submission of
 - Description of data needed
 - Access form(s) for specific data source(s)
 - Research approval documents
 - Protocol (or summary)
 - IRB approval letter
 - R&D approval letter
 - HIPAA and Informed Consent documents
 - Real SSN Access Request (where applicable)
- Specific access forms vary by resource
 - See VHA Data Portal “Access Overview” page

Data access for operations - including quality improvement

- Submission of description of data needed, justification and signature of supervisor and ISO
- Specific access forms vary by resource, examples:
 - [VA Form 9957 for scrambled SSN data on Mainframe](#)
 - [VHA NDS Healthcare Operations Form](#)
- See [VHA Data Portal Operations Access](#) page for details by data source.

Data Request Processes (VHA Data Portal)



Department of Veterans Affairs
VHA Data Portal

Home Data Sources Data Access Tools Resources Training About Us Support

Welcome to the VHA Data Portal!

The one-stop-shop for data users' needs.

The VHA Data Portal is a collaborative effort among the following program offices to provide a central gateway to information about VHA data:

- VHA National Data Systems (NDS)
- VA Information Resource Center (VIReC)
- VA Informatics and Computing Infrastructure (VINCI)
- VHA Data Quality Program

Our mission is to promote a knowledge-sharing culture that supports the needs of VHA data users. The portal integrates information from multiple sources into a common format and single location to promote a comprehensive knowledge base and to facilitate a positive end-user experience.

Data Access Overview

Operations Access

Preparatory to Research Access

Research Access

Medical Advisory Opinions
Access

Veterans Service Officers Access

Business Associate Agreements

Data Use Agreements

VHA Data Sharing Agreement
Repository

Data Access:

Visit the
Access Section
to learn about
requesting access
to VHA Data



News

Change in Real SSN Research Data Request Process

ORD has instituted a change in the approval process for researchers' requests for data with

Upcoming Events

VIReC Cyberseminars

September 16: IVR-Based Cognitive Behavior Therapy for Chronic Low Back Pain

Popular Links

Data Access

- [DART Overview and Forms](#)

Data Access Requirements are Determined by the Data Steward

- On the AITC Mainframe
 - **Local CUPS Point of Contact**
 - ADUSH Enrollment
 - MedSAS -scrambled SSN
 - MedSAS -real SSN for local facility
 - MCA & VSSC Web Reports -scrambled SSN
 - **National Data Systems (NDS)**
 - MedSAS -real SSN for VISN & National
 - MCA & VSSC Web Reports – real SSN
 - Vital Status File

Data Access Requirements (2)

- National Data Systems (NDS)
 - In the Corporate Data Warehouse (CDW)
 - CDW Domain Data
 - MCA (formerly DSS)
 - Text Integrated Utility (TIU) Notes
 - Vital Status Data
 - Other Data Venues
 - MedSAS Files (copies in SAS)
 - BIRLS
 - CAPRI/VistAWeb
 - Homeless Registry
 - OEF/OIF Roster File

Data Access Requirements (3)

- VA Information Resource Center (VIREC)
 - VA/CMS Data
- Pharmacy Benefits Management (PBM) Services
 - PBM Data
- Patient Care Services (PCS)
 - PCS Data

Data Source Specific Access Information

Data Source Request Processes

Expand a data source in the list below to view an outline of its data request process.

ADUSH Enrollment Files

Level of Access	Identifier	Functional Task Code	Data Source Location	Data Format	Type of Access	Request Process
National	Scrambled SSN	110NN01	AITC Mainframe	SAS	Direct	Local CUPS POC Request Process
VISN	Scrambled SSN	110NN01	AITC Mainframe	SAS	Direct	Local CUPS POC Request Process
Local	Scrambled SSN	110NN01	AITC Mainframe	SAS	Direct	Local CUPS POC Request Process

 [AITC Mainframe](#)

 [BIRLS Death File](#)

 [CDW Data](#)

 [MCA \(formerly DSS\) NDEs](#)

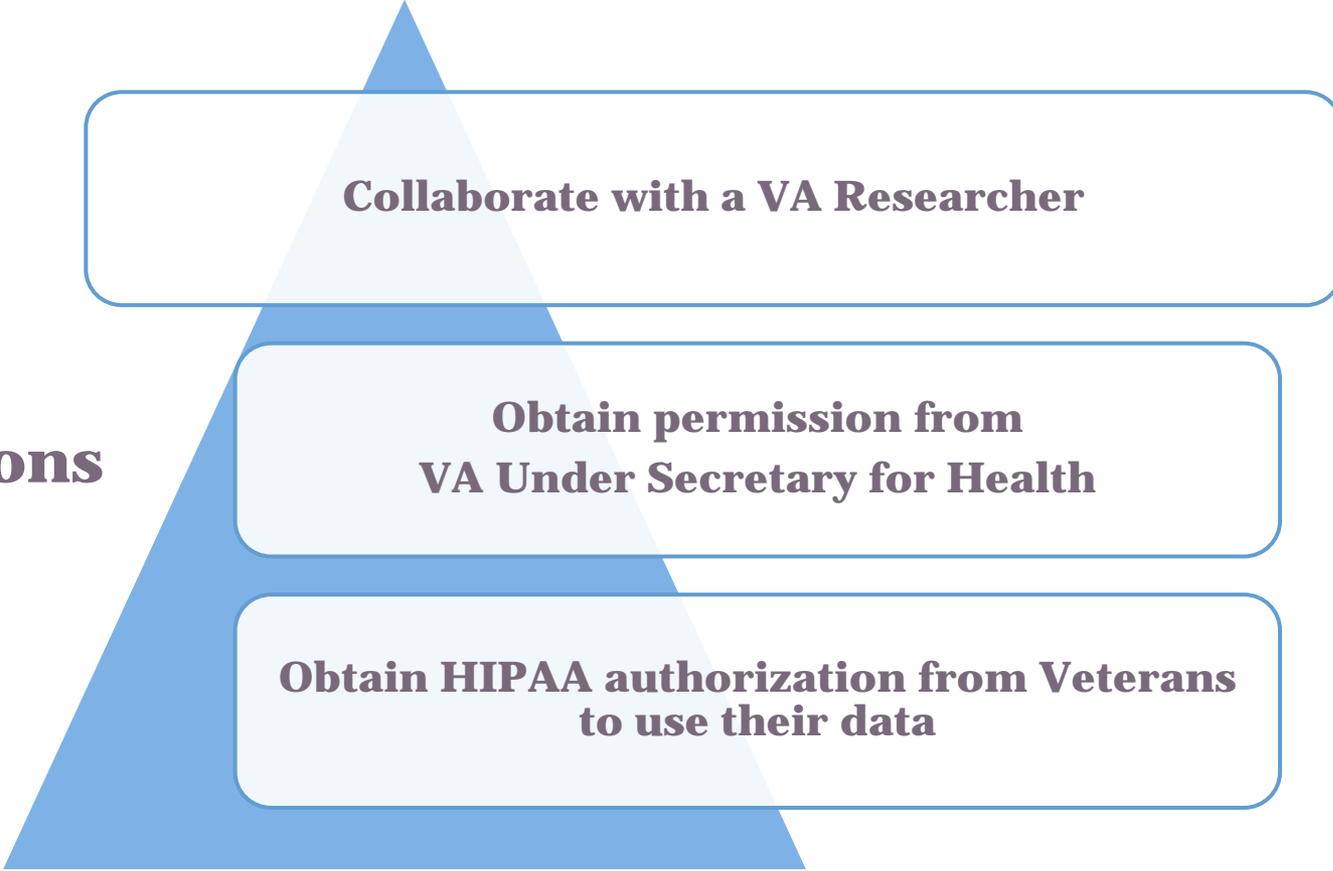
 [MCA \(formerly DSS\) Web Reports](#)

 [Medical SAS Inpatient & Outpatient Data Sets](#)

 [Non-VA Medical Care \(formerly Fee Basis\) Files](#)

Access to VA Data by Non-VA Researchers

Data containing Protected Health Information (PHI) restricted to VA researchers



Collaborate with a VA Researcher

**Obtain permission from
VA Under Secretary for Health**

**Obtain HIPAA authorization from Veterans
to use their data**

Exceptions

Topics for Today

- Overview of VA data sources and databases
- Data processing platforms and EHR (read-only) access portals
- Policies governing data access
- **Where to go for more help**

New User to VA Data?



INTRANET

[» Open Advanced Search](#)

VA INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER (VIREC)

[VIREC Home](#)
[VA/CMS Home](#)
[About Us](#)
[New Users of VA Data](#)
[Data Transition to CDW](#)
[News & Updates](#)
[FAQs](#)
[Acronyms](#)
[HelpDesk](#)

Introduction to VIREC and VA Data

Overview

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is structured into three main service lines, each providing specific services based on Veterans' eligibility.

- [Veterans Health Administration](#) (VHA)
- [Veterans Benefits Administration](#) (VBA)
- [National Cemetery Administration](#) (NCA)

Health services research in the VHA is supported by the Office of Research and Development (ORD), Health Services Research & Development Service (HSR&D). [HSR&D's](#) website provides an excellent overview of health services research.

VIREC's Role

The VA Information Research Center (VIREC) develops resources and provides guidance to VA researchers using VA data. Our mission is to improve the quality of VA research that utilizes databases and information systems.

VIREC products and services enable VA researchers to access and learn about VA data and information systems. VIREC:

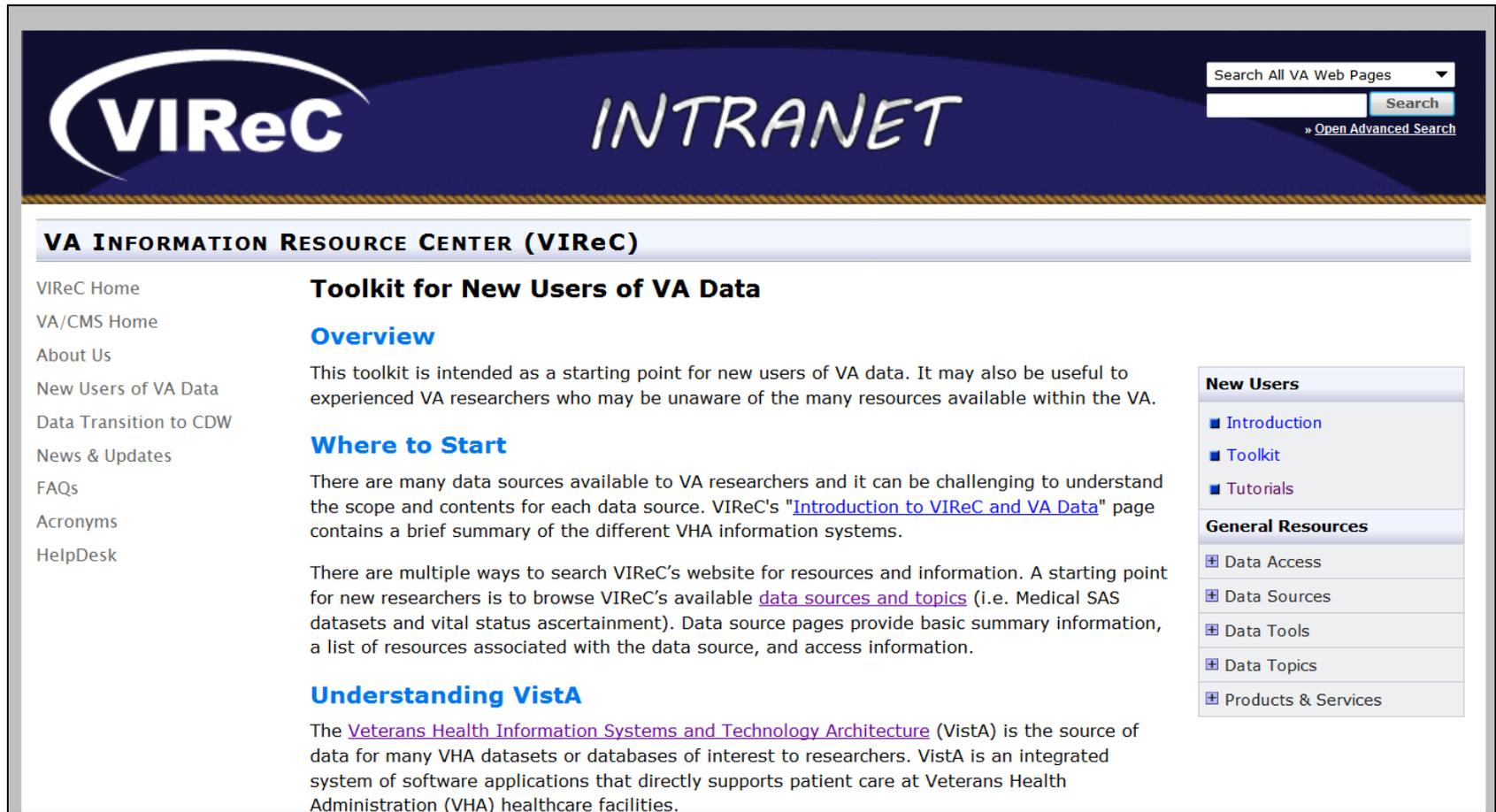
New Users

- [Introduction](#)
- [Toolkit](#)
- [Tutorials](#)

General Resources

- ⊕ [Data Access](#)
- ⊕ [Data Sources](#)
- ⊕ [Data Tools](#)
- ⊕ [Data Topics](#)
- ⊕ [Products & Services](#)

Toolkit for New Users of VA Data



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VA INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER (VIREC)

VIREC Home
VA/CMS Home
About Us
New Users of VA Data
Data Transition to CDW
News & Updates
FAQs
Acronyms
HelpDesk

Toolkit for New Users of VA Data

Overview

This toolkit is intended as a starting point for new users of VA data. It may also be useful to experienced VA researchers who may be unaware of the many resources available within the VA.

Where to Start

There are many data sources available to VA researchers and it can be challenging to understand the scope and contents for each data source. VIREC's "[Introduction to VIREC and VA Data](#)" page contains a brief summary of the different VHA information systems.

There are multiple ways to search VIREC's website for resources and information. A starting point for new researchers is to browse VIREC's available [data sources and topics](#) (i.e. Medical SAS datasets and vital status ascertainment). Data source pages provide basic summary information, a list of resources associated with the data source, and access information.

Understanding Vista

The [Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture](#) (Vista) is the source of data for many VHA datasets or databases of interest to researchers. Vista is an integrated system of software applications that directly supports patient care at Veterans Health Administration (VHA) healthcare facilities.

New Users

- Introduction
- Toolkit
- Tutorials

General Resources

- Data Access
- Data Sources
- Data Tools
- Data Topics
- Products & Services

Obtaining Help – HSRData-L Listserv

- Join at VIREC's Intranet Web site
- Exchange of current information, ideas, questions, and answers about data and **information systems** issues affecting VA research
- Discussion among $\approx 1,100$ VA-only researchers, data stewards, managers and other users
- Searchable archive of past discussions

Obtaining Help – Online Data Resources

- **Health Economics Resource Center (HERC)**
 - <http://www.herc.research.va.gov>
- **VA Informatics and Computing Infrastructure (VINCI)**
 - http://www.hsrdr.research.va.gov/for_researchers/vinci/
- **VIReC Cyberseminars:**
 - <http://www.virec.research.va.gov/Resources/Cyberseminars.asp>

Obtaining Help from VIReC

- **VIReC Intranet site**
 - **Research User Guides (RUGs)**
 - Variable-level information
 - **Technical Reports**
 - **Web-site “Toolkit for New Users of VA Data”**
 - **Monthly Data Issue Briefs**
- **HelpDesk**
 - virec@va.gov
 - (708) 202-2413

Contact Information

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VIReC@ va.gov

708-202-2413

Planned FY15 Database & Methods Cyberseminars

- Requesting Access to VA Data for Research or Operations
- Assessing Inpatient and Outpatient VA Health Care Use
- Measuring Veterans Health Services Use in VA and Medicare
- Examining Veterans' Pharmacy Data Use
- Assessing Race and Ethnicity
- Measuring Laboratory Use and Results Using the VA DSS National Lab Data
- Applying Comorbidity Measures Using VA and Medicare Data
- Improving Mortality Ascertainment
- Extracting Data from the EHR Using CAPRI and VistAWeb
- Using Data in the CDW

Questions?

VIREC Database & Methods Cyberseminar Series

Next session:
November 3, 2014

Requesting Access to VA Data for Research & Operations

Linda Kok, MS