



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
Media Relations

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Feb. 22, 2021

VA launches public guidance to further protect Veterans' personal information

WASHINGTON — This February the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) launched [Ethics Principles for Access to and Use of Veteran Data](#) as part of ongoing efforts to protect Veteran data.

The new online resource outlines [nine principles](#) for communicating clear expectations on how Veteran data is to be managed and viewed by Veterans, staff, VA partners and other stakeholders.

These principles reinforce VA's standards of data privacy and protection maintained during VA's distribution of nearly 2 million COVID-19 vaccinations to date, and other critical health care services during the coronavirus pandemic.

"VA's principle-based ethics framework takes a proactive approach to data management and privacy by setting standards for our partners to follow," says Acting VA Under Secretary for Health Richard Stone, M.D. "VA is applying this framework to all data interoperability initiatives, including those tied to our COVID-19 response and modernization efforts."

Having clearly defined integrities for everyone who accesses or uses Veteran data puts VA at the forefront of organizational responsibility for ethical data practices. Veterans trust VA to promote and respect their privacy, confidentiality and autonomy within the services the department provides and supports. The department will continue to uphold that trust by remaining consistent with VA's [I-CARE](#) values of integrity, commitment, advocacy, respect and excellence to promote and ensure responsible practices whenever Veteran data is accessed or used.

The ethics framework was developed by the Data Ethics Work Group established by the VA Interoperability Leadership team and the Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) National Center for Ethics in Health Care, along with input from Veterans. The department is actively working to ensure all VA directives, policies and standards reflect these principles which the agency anticipates completing by the end of 2022.

Learn more about VA's COVID-19 vaccination response and how [VHA's National Center for Ethics in Health Care](#) continues to work proactively to build trust in managing access and use of Veteran data.

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