



VA Information Resource Center
Data Issues Brief
July, 2001

1. Capture of Non-VA, VA-Paid LTC Workload Data Mandated

In accordance with requirements of the Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act (the Millennium Act), VHA Directive 2001-037 [REDACTED] requires VA facilities to collect data on non-VA, VA-paid workload and cost data for the long term care residential and Home Based Health Care programs effective September 1, 2001. The Directive establishes processes to use the Patient Care Encounter (PCE) functionality of VISTA and the VHA's Decision Support System to collect data on workload in the same month that it occurs. The Non-VA Contract Care Office of the Geriatric Extended Care Strategic Health Group (114) and the DSS Program Office (17) are jointly responsible for the contents of the Directive. Questions may be addressed to the DSS Bedford Technical Support and Development Office via Outlook E-mail group VHA BTSO Development.

2. Austin Automation Center (AAC) Upgrades to SAS Version 8.10

On Saturday, July 14th, the Austin Automation Center (AAC) upgraded it's version of SAS(R) Software on the OS/390 mainframe from 6.09 to 8.10. No action needs to be taken on the part of the user as the new version will automatically be executed for both batch jobs and interactive sessions. A summary of the new features are documented at AAC under TSO NEWS SAS. The complete changes and enhancements can be viewed online at the SAS Institute's Technical Support web page (http://www.sas.com/service/techsup/news/whatsnew_v8.html). Publications are also available for purchase though SAS Publishing (<http://www.sas.com/service/publications.html> , 1-800-727-3228 or e-mail: sasbook@unx.sas.com). All users are encouraged to familiarize themselves with and take advantage of the new features of this much anticipated version of SAS.

3. NCHS Releases New Trends in Health and Aging Data

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) recently announced a new release of data in the Data Warehouse on Trends in Health and Aging. The new release contains the latest population estimates (1981-1999 with 6, 12 and 20 age groups), new and updated data from the National Ambulatory Care Survey and Behavior Risk Factors Surveillance System, and updated data from National Health Interview Survey on cigarette smoking, 1965-1998 (available in July, 2001). Most of the new and updated tables contain statistical confidence intervals for prevalence estimates. State population data can now be graphically displayed using the Beyond 20/20 mapping option. For more information about this data source, visit the NCHS Web site at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/agingact.htm>.

4. New Look for VIREC Web Site

As of June, 2001, all federal Web sites were required to be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The VA released its own publication detailing requirements for accessible Web sites, Handbook 6102. These regulations, which are very worthwhile, have necessitated some changes on the VIREC Web site, including: reducing the use of graphics and buttons, embedding certain information in the HTML tags, setting backgrounds that contrast with text color, and allowing the end-user to scale text size and select a suitable font. In addition to the accessibility changes that have been made on the VIREC Web site, there have been several content changes as well. Some of the new and revised content includes:

- A revised Mission Statement. This has been added to the front page of our Web site and may be found at: <http://www.virec.research.va.gov/DEFAULT.HTM>
- Job vacancies within VIREC. Visitors may now view open positions at: <http://www.virec.research.va.gov/JOB-VACANCIES.HTM>
- A new product called VetPop2000. VetPop2000 is a CD ROM product produced by the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of the Actuary and details veteran population trends through 2020. These electronic files are highly flexible research tools and they replace 60 volumes of paper copy. VetPop2000 may be accessed at: http://www.virec.research.va.gov/VETPOP2000%20MODEL/VETPOP2000_INTRO.HTM

5. CSP Cite.Net to Exhibit at ITC '01

The Cooperative Studies Program (CSP) Cite.Net will be exhibiting at the upcoming VA Information Technology Conference in Austin, TX (August 6 – 10). Cite.net stands for CSP Information Technology Experts Network. This group, which consists of the data processing chiefs of each of the coordinating centers, as well as a few senior level programmers, was formed to increase communication and collaboration among the CSP centers on IT issues. The Cite.Net booth will showcase Cooperative Studies Program information technology, such as study Web sites, Web-based data collection and management, and PC-based distributed data collection and management. For more information about Cite.Net, contact Mark Jones (phone: 505-248-3203 or e-mail him at: mark.jones@csp.research.med.va.gov).

Editor's Note: We were incorrect in announcing a new Resource Center in our June, 2001 edition of the *Data Issues Brief*. Rather, this grant is a time-limited Service Directed Research project located at the Houston COE that will create an instruments service and Web site to aid investigators in identifying and selecting appropriate measurement tools for conducting health services research and program evaluation. We extend our sincere apologies to our readership for this error.

Data Issues Briefs are developed by the staff of the VA Information Resource Center (VIREC) for the purpose of informing and updating VA researchers on current and pending happenings and changes regarding health data, databases, and medical informatics. *Data Issues Briefs* are produced on a monthly basis and are distributed through e-mail subscriptions. Previous releases are posted and available on the VIREC Web site at <http://www.virec.research.va.gov>. If you wish to receive future issues direct, please send an e-mail message to the VIREC at virec@research.hines.va.gov or call 708-202-2413. If you have any suggestions or comments about the *Data Issues Briefs*, please e-mail Diane C. Cowper, Editor, at cowper@research.hines.med.va.gov.