**VA Administrative Data Access & Integrity Campaign**

This document outlines two initiatives to improve the quality and usability of VA’s key enterprise data. The first, the VA Data Access Modernization Campaign, will ensure that all data consumers (including VA systems, external customers, and Cerner) can quickly and easily access up-to-date, authoritative administrative data on Veterans.[[1]](#footnote-1) The second, the VA Identity and Military History Data Strategy, is a more targeted initiative to ensure the comprehensiveness and integrity of VA’s identity and military service data.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**I. VA Data Access Modernization Campaign**

Today, accessing VA customer data is confusing and difficult. Internally, VA employees and contractors frequently struggle to find and correctly interpret VA data sources, and system integrations regularly involve months of meetings and paperwork, even to access test data in a development environment. Accessing VA data is even more difficult for third parties, making it nearly impossible for the private sector to build products using VA data or services.

The VA Data Access Modernization Campaign envisions a VA in which:

* Internal teams know where to find authoritative data when building applications, and can easily and reliably access that data.
* Cerner has a single authoritative source for VA and DoD administrative patient data.
* Veterans provide their data to VA just once, rather than repeatedly for different services. In many cases, service member data will be automatically available prior to engaging with VA.

## A thriving ecosystem of private sector innovators deliver world-class services to Veterans and other VA customers securely using VA data.

The guiding principle is that VA should be able to easily draw on everything it knows about a Veteran to provide accurate, personalized services. This Campaign will be led by Enterprise Services’ James Whited and Veteran Experience Office’s Michelle Rowe, with additional support from the CTO’s office, the API Program within PSF, and A&ES within Demand Management.

**1. Vet360 as a Comprehensive Customer Profile**

***Guiding Principle****: Basic administrative Veteran Customer Profile information should be available to internal and external systems in a single API call.*

Vet360 was conceived as a centralized place for VA systems to access Veteran Customer Profile information, a role it can and should play within the next 12 months. While the exact list of in-scope fields remains to be determined, the Customer Profile would at heart include: demographics, identity (see more context below), socioeconomic data, contact information, military service summary, commonly accessed VHA and VBA data (e.g. health eligibility, disability rating), and miscellaneous administrative data (e.g. POA, next of kin, customer preferences).

Under this vision, existing authoritative data sources (ADSs) generally remain authoritative for the data they provide Vet360. However, Vet360 will become authoritative for those common data elements that do not clearly belong to any one system and may conflict across copies, such as contact information.[[3]](#footnote-3) Vet360 will have well-documented and consistent business rules to reconcile conflicts.

Because this vision relies on retrieving data from other VA systems, the single greatest dependency is ensuring streamlined, reliable access to source systems. See Part 2 of the Campaign, below, for more about how to accomplish this.

In the long run, this campaign also envisions the deprecation of all other legacy integrations for administrative data, so that all of VA relies on service calls to Vet360 for Veteran customer information.

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| *Identity:* A comprehensive Customer Profile *should* in principle contain identity data. Given that it is already well-developed in this regard, MVI may persist as a separate system that does identity look-ups and correlates to other systems. However, the Vet360/MVI distinction should be invisible to API consumers: Vet360 will be able to return identity data from within a single Vet360 Profile call, rather than the API consumer connecting to two separate systems. Vet360 may also transition to using ICN as its unique identifier. Systems with existing MVI integrations may continue using them, but will generally transition to Vet360’s identity service upon Vet360 integration. |

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| *EHRM:* While VA should pursue this strategy regardless of EHRM, the Cerner implementation creates additional urgency. Cerner requires a single authoritative source of administrative data. Vet360 should be this source for VA data; and, by taking DMDC data as an additional input, would provide an authoritative source of DOD-VA reconciled data. Absent Vet360 reconciling DOD and VA conflicts, that work will functionally be done within Cerner, which is likely to lead to incorrect results and lack of DOD or VA control over the outcome.  Complete implementation of this Vet360 vision is not feasible by the testing deadline of June 2019. By that date, however, Vet360 *can* adopt ADR data as a provisional source for all required data elements, using the well-developed E&E service. Vet360 would thereby load an initial copy of all data elements sufficient for testing, and would continue to iterate on data quality by bringing additional sources online over the course of 2019. |

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| *SMART on FHIR:* Vet360 should develop a streamlined, standardized way for different applications to interact with its data. This may involve using SMART on FHIR for medical data applications. |

**2. Modern APIs and Centralized Access**

***Guiding Principle****: Internal and external systems should be able to easily identify and access the authoritative source for any piece of VA data.*

This Campaign aims not just to improve Vet360, but to facilitate access to all data across VA. To this end, the Campaign would require that each VA authoritative data source have a high-quality read/write API (“Data API”), typically maintained by the same team who owns the data. While these standards will ultimately apply to all systems with VA data, only a small group of top priorities are required immediately: MVI, Vet360, VADIR, ADR/ES, and CorpDB.

Data APIs should meet the following standards:

1. API documentation is machine-readable, accurate, and comprehensive — developed and maintained by those most familiar with the data. Consumers can reliably understand and use VA data without requiring clarification from its owners.
2. APIs are generally accessible to all data consumers in development environments, with consumers following a standardized, documented path to production. VEO and other relevant offices oversee this streamlined governance process, restricting production access to qualified teams.
3. APIs adhere to Service Level Agreements of 99.9% availability in their production environment and 99.0% availability in a pre-production environment.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Additional, actionable details regarding these standards are forthcoming in a separate document.

Vet360 will rely on these APIs to drive the Customer Profile, and other consuming systems can go directly to these APIs in cases where they require more data than what is included in Vet360. Documentation, access instructions, and functionality to request production access will be clearly available on a centralized platform at developer.va.gov, available to any VA employee.

This API mandate will be announced by the CTO and Enterprise Services, and the technical work to achieve it will be supported by the PSF API team.

**Timeline**

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| *Feb 2019* | Campaign announced and API standards are released. |
| *Mar 2019* | Completed architecture plans for Vet360 service, including orchestration to MVI and initial list of fields in Customer profile. |
| *Jun 2019* | Vet360 is able to consume all required fields from ADR, providing a baseline set of data for Cerner testing. |
| *Aug 2019* | Completed Vet360 integration with DMDC. |
| *Oct 2019* | MVI, VADIR, ADR, CorpDB, and Vet360 all meet API standards in Step 2 above. |
| *Nov 2019* | Completed definition of business rules to reconcile VA and DOD data within Vet360. |
| *Dec 2019* | Completed Vet360 integrations with MVI, VADIR, ADR, and CorpDB. |
| *Jan 2020* | Completed implementation of business rules to reconcile conflicting data from all sources. |
| *Mar 2020* | Cerner IOC. |

**II. VA Identity and Military History Data Strategy**

In addition to improving *access* to administrative data, VA must improve the comprehensiveness of its key datasets. There is not currently a single, simple, centralized method to reliably and accurately verify the Veteran status of a given individual, or link an individual with all the information VA may know about that person. VA’s existing identity and military record databases are highly incomplete; different VA components do not trust authoritative sources and regularly check different databases in different ways, leading Veterans to be accurately identified for receipt of some services, but not for others. This Strategy outlines a concrete series of steps to achieve complete and actionable coverage of these data domains in the respective authoritative data sources, MVI and VADIR.

**1. Enhanced Common Population Project**

***Guiding Principle****:* All *known Veteran identities should be in MVI, DEERS, and VADIR.*

VA should generally not require a Veteran to prove their Veteran status when seeking services; rather, VA should be able to reliably determine nearly any individual’s Veteran status using Government data. To achieve this goal, VA must ensure MVI, DEERS, and VADIR each contain all known Veterans by importing additional key databases of known Veterans. This includes:

* Complete the Common Population Project Part 1 (currently underway), to import identity and military service records from BIRLS and VistA to VADIR, MVI and DEERS.
* Complete a Common Population Project Part 2 to additionally import identities and military service records from: (1) USVETS, (2) NPRC Registry, (3) Any additional BIRLS records not included in Common Population 1.
* While unreliable records will not be imported, records with missing data should be imported in a provisional status, allowing additional fields to be added later.
* Import all DEERS Service Member and Veteran records directly into MVI so they can be accessed within the Primary View rather than requiring a fallback search to DoD.

**2. Add Legacy Veteran and Add New Service Member Functions**

***Guiding Principle****: Missing identities or military service records should be added to key databases via standard, documented processes.*

This work falls into two categories:

*Add Legacy Veteran*: A function to add legacy Veterans to MVI, DEERS, and VADIR, when there is no record of a Veteran’s service in any existing government database.

* The process will reuse existing MVI addPerson function, currently used by systems with enterprise integrations.
* Notably, this function will be expanded to accommodate adding military service information. The updated function will allow the enterprise collection and verification of incomplete military service information for known Veterans, as well as the military service records for newly identified Veterans.
* This work will be built on the existing Service Request documented as SR-391 in ESCP. The design can be coordinated by DSVA, in association with the relevant tech leads.

*Add New Service Member*: A process so that new servicemembers are automatically added to MVI at the same time they are added to DEERS.

* When new servicemembers are added to DEERS, an event is triggered in VADIR to ensure replication in VADIR via VA Satellite.
* This same event will then be used to ensure that the servicemembers get added to MVI as well.

As noted in Footnote 1, similar processes for other populations will be outlined in a subsequent document.

**3. Title 38 Status Codes**

***Guiding Principle****: Analyzing military service data for eligibility decisions should be done once, authoritatively and automatically, rather than repeated manually throughout the organization.*

Today, different VA business lines independently and manually review raw military service records to determine if individuals have sufficient military service to qualify for various benefits and healthcare. This process is duplicative and prone to system and human error, as thousands of staff are entrusted to accurately and reliably apply complex eligibility rules. To obviate the need for these redundant and unreliable reviews, VADIR has begun implementing the Title 38 Veteran Status Code, which summarizes the status of an individual’s military service into one of several categories. This typology should be expanded to comprehensively reflect the range of Veteran eligibilities used at VA, and must be implemented precisely. Upon its delivery, it is envisioned that VA business lines should, in most cases, shift from manual military record review to use of the Status Code.



1. Future iterations of this document will address other populations of interest, such as dependents. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The recommendations from DSVA’s previous Veteran Profile strategy paper, from fall 2018, are reflected in this paper as well, primarily in the second component. The scope of this paper is broader than that paper. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In other words, for most of its fields, Vet360 is not authoritative, but merely an aggregator of authoritative data. For a few fields, however, Vet360 itself is authoritative. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. It is understood that Standard 3 may be achieved slightly later than Standards 1 and 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)