

VA



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# Top tasks beta test

## Research Readout

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# Background & Goals

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# Background

All VAMC websites have pages for billing and insurance, register for care, and medical records. Currently, this content lives on unstructured VAMC detail pages.

The Drupal CMS team has built “hardened” pages for these 3 content types. The intent of the new pages is to:

- Create reusable, validated content for addresses, phone numbers, and office hours.
- Ensure that all VAMCs have consistent messaging by implementing nationally standardized content.
- Make it easier for Veterans to find what they need.

This change will require VAMC editors to enter information into the new forms.

# Research goals

Our team wanted to test both the communications about the project and the CMS workflow to identify any stumbling blocks before rolling out this change to all VAMC editors.

## Hypotheses

- Editors will read and understand the launch email and instructions
- The emails, training videos, and KB articles will equip editors to do the work
- Editors will copy the needed info from their existing pages
- Info on existing pages is current
- The CMS workflow can be completed easily

# Method

We invited a small group of VAMC editors and one staff member from VHA digital media to update their content using the new forms and provide feedback about their experience.

Participants had 10 days to complete the updates to the 3 new pages.

## Methods

- Survey about CMS usage, skill level, and sentiment (7 responses)
- 1:1 interviews conducted via Zoom (4 responses)
- Visual audit of completed pages

# Who we spoke with

## Interview participants

- 3 VAMC editors, 1 VHA Digital Media staff
- Time in this role: more than 3 years
- Confidence using CMS: 3 very confident, 1 somewhat confident
- Web content is 50% to 100% of their job
- Average sentiment about Drupal - 56/100 (neutral)

# Who we didn't speak with

3 people agreed to participate and filled out the survey, but did not respond to interview requests or complete the update tasks.

Differences from the interview participants:

- 2 have been in their role 1-3 years
- Average sentiment about Drupal - 29/100 (negative)

# A caveat

This research does not reflect the experience of editors who

- have been in their role for less than 3 years
- Have negative attitudes about Drupal CMS
- are less confident in using the CMS.

## Recommendation

- For future research, ensure that the pool of recruits is weighted towards those more likely to drop out, so that the final group of participants represents all skill levels.



## Key findings

1. Emails and training were effective and clear
2. Gathering contact info was an unexpected challenge for editors
3. The CMS workflow was easy to use
4. “Use facility address” and “use facility hours” could be improved
5. Office hours picker adds toil

# Research Findings: Communications

# The instruction email is effective

All 4 participants appreciated the clarity and simplicity of the email communications. Including the deadline up front was particularly helpful.

*"I was informed very fully, with the deadline and the approximate time [to complete the work]. It made it easy to accomplish the task."*

*"When I saw that email with the steps, I think it helps you learn how to fish."*

Dear VA Medical Center content editor,  
3 pages in Drupal CMS are now available for you to update:

- Billing and insurance
- Register for care
- Medical records

### Action needed

- Review the training videos and KB articles linked below
- Update information on 3 pages per VAMC system
- Publish the new pages by [DATE]

These updates should take less than an hour to complete.

### Why is this changing?

The new forms will:

- Make it easier for you to manage addresses and office hours
- Ensure that all VAMCs have consistent messaging.
- Make it easier for Veterans to find what they need.

### What to expect

When you log in to Drupal CMS, you will find a draft page for Billing and Insurance. We will update the other two pages in the next few days.

### URLs stay the same

When you publish the new page, Drupal CMS will automatically archive the old page.

### Training

Get the details on how to update your pages through these videos and KB articles.

## Two emails may not be enough

3 out of 7 participants did not complete the updates. For whatever reason, it wasn't a priority for them. This will likely be the case for some editors in the actual launch, too.

### **Recommendation**

- Plan for the need to remind editors about this work.

## Context is always a factor

While the overall sentiment about the launch email was neutral, one participant pointed out how this might land for some editors:

*“It's frustrating to have new things we have to do when simple things we've been asking for for a year haven't been corrected.”*

**Communication about what CMS is doing is valuable for building trust.**

## Training

# People use training in a variety of ways

The training videos and KB articles were well-received by all participants who used them.

- 2 participants used training materials for one page and skipped the others because they felt confident in using the new forms.
- One participant didn't use training materials at all, she just jumped in.
- 2 participants wished that the KB articles contained screen shots.

*"The training was very straightforward."*

*"If I'm embarking on something new, I go to the Knowledge Base and try to figure it out."*

*"To be honest, I didn't watch the videos, it wasn't necessary. ... For me the email alone was enough."*

## Gathering contact info was an unexpected challenge

We did not tell participants where to get the locations' office info from. We assumed that they would copy the info from their current site.

- Instead, all 3 VAMC editors reached out to SMEs to get current contact info.
- Some VAMCs lack a directory or other source of truth for office info
- 2 editors struggled to get the info they needed and couldn't finish updating their pages.

*"It's always so painful. Even after 7-plus years, it's hard to know who to contact. When I do figure it out, they don't always respond in a timely fashion."*

*"Finding information is tricky everywhere."*

## Lack of contact info impacts Veterans

- For one editor, the medical records fax number does not exist on the current site, and they couldn't figure out who to ask for it.
- Another editor called the billing office, but no one answered.
- If a PAO can't call the billing office successfully, neither can a Veteran.

*“I couldn't get through to the billing office—it rang and rang—so I couldn't finish [the task].”*



## Preparation

# Editors need more guidance about gathering content

## Recommendation

- Consider whether editors should use existing info on their sites or gather updated content from SMEs.
- Communicate this to editors in the announcement email so that they have time to prepare.

*"Make sure PAOs have enough lead time ... When I did this project, I didn't realize I needed to get this information."*

# Research Findings: CMS workflow

## The CMS workflow was easy to use

Participants spent 15 to 30 minutes entering data into the new forms. They were able to complete the updates with ease because the workflow replicates patterns used on other pages.

*"It was very intuitive."*

*"I thought it was super easy, I really think it's a really clear process."*

*... If folks have used [the CMS] at all before, it should be simple."*

- One participant who sometimes struggles to find the right piece of content to edit, noted that it was easy to find these pages because there's only one of each type.
- Participants did not express any difficulty with the location card opening in a new window, though one participant worried that this might be confusing to newer editors.

## Address fields are flexible enough

- Participants appreciated the flexibility of the Non-clinical service location address fields.
- One participant said the fields don't match how her VAMC refers to things - but she was able to use the fields successfully anyway.

*"We don't go by building numbers; we point out landmarks."*

### Address

#### Name of office or location

Do not repeat the name of the facility here.

70 characters remaining

#### Building name/number

70 characters remaining

#### Wing, Floor, or Room Number

70 characters remaining

#### Street address

☒ Use the facility's street address?

## Some uncertainty about office names

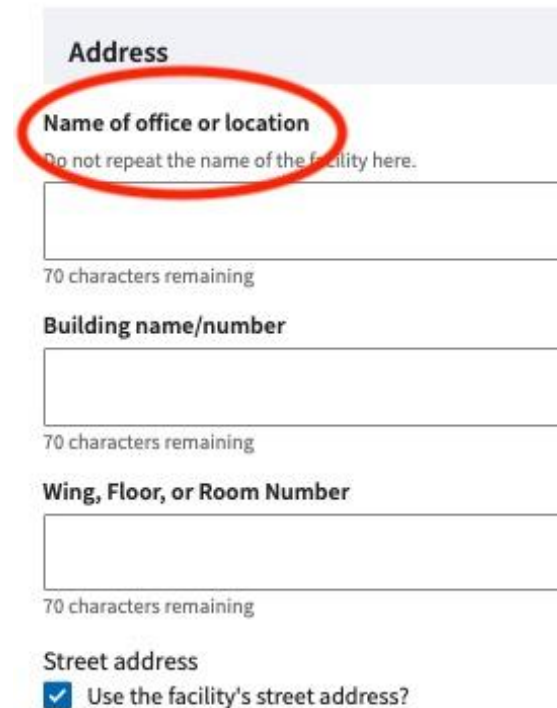
- 2 editors had concerns about the Name field because they didn't know how the office refers to itself.
- The difference between plain-language Web page names (like Medical records) and the actual office name (Release of Information) caused some uncertainty.

*"My fearful disconnect was how an area names things."*

*"I wanted to know: is this the official title? Do I need to say 'Billing and insurance'? I put 'Agent Cashier window.'"*

### Recommendation

Add examples or additional guidance in help text or KB. [#8830](#)



The screenshot shows a form titled "Address" with three main input fields and a checkbox. The first field, "Name of office or location", is circled in red. Below it is a text hint: "Do not repeat the name of the facility here." and a character count "70 characters remaining". The second field is "Building name/number", also with a "70 characters remaining" count. The third field is "Wing, Floor, or Room Number", also with a "70 characters remaining" count. At the bottom is a checkbox labeled "Use the facility's street address?" which is checked.

**Address**

**Name of office or location**  
Do not repeat the name of the facility here.

70 characters remaining

**Building name/number**

70 characters remaining

**Wing, Floor, or Room Number**

70 characters remaining

**Street address**  
☒ Use the facility's street address?

## “Use facility address” could be improved

“Use facility address” confused some participants, because they couldn’t see the address in question.

*"I didn't know if I had to put the actual address here, or if it would show up when I checked that box."*

### Recommendation

Surface the facility address when “use facility address” is checked. [#8803](#)

**Address**

**Name of office or location**  
Do not repeat the name of the facility here.  
  
70 characters remaining

**Building name/number**  
  
70 characters remaining

**Wing, Floor, or Room Number**  
  
70 characters remaining

**Street address**  
☒ Use the facility's street address?

## Office hours picker adds toil

All 4 participants complained about the office hours fields.

- Having to choose from all the minutes (instead of 15 minute increments) adds unnecessary mental load.
- Participants find it cumbersome to input hours for each day when the hours are the same every day.

*"The most annoying part was entering the hours. I would love if there was a way to say 'Monday through Friday is this schedule' instead of entering that five times."*

The screenshot shows a web form titled "Hours" with a table for selecting office hours. The table has columns for "From" and "To" times, and rows for each day of the week (Sunday through Thursday). A dropdown menu is open for the "From" field on Sunday, displaying a list of hours from 05 to 18 and AM/PM options. The "To" field for Sunday is also visible, showing a time selection interface.

	From	To
Sunday	05 12 PM	--:--
Monday	06 13 AM	--:--
Tuesday	07 14	--:--
Wednesday	08 15	--:--
Thursday	09 16	--:--

# Iterate on office hours (again)

## Recommendations

- Consider adding “copy to all” function
- Consider a streamlined hours picker that also allows you to click to input an exact time
- Look at google calendar “working hours” setting for an example
- Part of the epic Standardize hours components [#8821](#)

M

T

W

T

F

S

S

Monday

1:00pm

to

9:30pm

⊕

Copy to all

Tuesday

1:00pm

to

9:30pm

⊕

Wednesday

1:00pm

to

9:30pm

⊕

Thursday

1:00pm

to

9:30pm

⊕

Friday

1:00pm

to

9:30pm

⊕



## “Use facility hours” is confusing

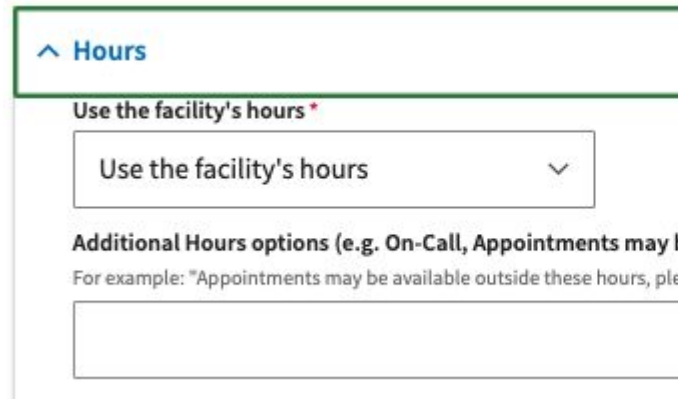
2 participants were confused by “use facility hours.” As with “use facility address,” there’s no way to see what the facility hours are. Plus the labels are confusing.

*"I saw a checkbox for using facility hours: for me initially it wasn't apparent if I had to input the facility hours if I checked it. I started putting in the facility hours before I noticed that checkbox."*

### Recommendation

Show the facility hours when “use facility address” is checked.

[#8803](#). Improve field labels and help text [#8302](#)








The screenshot shows a form section with a green header bar containing a blue upward arrow and the text "Hours". Below the header, the text "Use the facility's hours \*" is displayed. Underneath is a dropdown menu with the text "Use the facility's hours" and a downward arrow. Below the dropdown, the text "Additional Hours options (e.g. On-Call, Appointments may I" is shown, followed by a line of text that is partially cut off: "For example: "Appointments may be available outside these hours, ple". At the bottom of the section is a large, empty rectangular input field.

# Summary

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# Results

## Hypotheses

- Editors will read and understand the launch email and instructions 
- The emails, training videos, and KB articles will equip editors to do the work 
- Editors will copy the needed info from their existing pages 
- Info on existing pages is current 
- The CMS workflow can be completed easily 

# Recommendations

## General

- Ensure that the pool of research recruits is weighted towards those more likely to drop out, so that the final group of participants represents a broad range of people.

## Communications

- Plan for the need to remind editors about this work.
- Consider whether editors should use existing info on their sites or gather updated content from SMEs.
- Communicate the strategy for gathering info in the announcement email so that editors have time to prepare.

## CMS

- Add examples or additional guidance for office names. [#8830](#)
- Surface the facility's address and hours in the Non-clinical location form. [#8803](#)
- Improve the hours picker. [#8821](#)
- Improve the field labels and help text for hours. [#8302](#)

## Next steps

1. Refine github issues
2. Evaluate level of effort
3. Prioritize issues