GI Bill Comparison Tool(GIBCT)   
Data Service(GIDS) User Guide

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| V1.1 | Rick Lee | 7/3/2016 | Revisions to reflect application changes since 6/15/2016 |
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# Document Scope

This document covers the workflows, procedures and policies required to ingest and deploy data to the GIBCT application. The scope of this document does not include the specific data contained within each file nor the source of each subset of data. Please refer to the EDU project manager for the specific information related to each data set managed by the DS.

Please refer to the ADDITIONAL RESOURCES section of this document for more information about the GIBCT Data Service (GIDS) application.

# Terminology

There are a number of terms referenced in this document that are defined as follows:

* GIBCT: GI Bill Comparison Tool
* GIDS: GI Bill Comparison Tool Data Service
* **Source CSVs**: Input data, in the form of \*.csv (Comma Separated Values) files, produced by VA and other external providers.
* **Institution Data**: The information from the Source CSVs, after it has been aggregated and processed into complete records for each institution, suitable for display in GIBCT. Institution data corresponds to the contents of “data.csv” in previous revisions of GIDS.
* **Preview Data**: Institution data that has been created but is not yet publicly visible on GIBCT. Preview data can be viewed by GIDS users in order to validate its correctness.
* **Production Data**: Institution data that is publicly visible on GIBCT.
* **Version**: Every time new source CSVs are uploaded and incorporated into a new revision of the Institution data, a version is created and assigned a sequential version number. The new version is first available as a preview version, for validation purposes. Once validated it can be published as a new production version and made publicly available.

# GIDS Scope Limitations

The GIDS application allows EDU stakeholders to update the data rendered by GIBCT. The scope of this tool is limited to data changes only. The following types of changes require Digital Service developer interventions as they are not covered by the scope of the GIDS application (this is not an exhaustive list):

* Changes to non-data content (i.e. Info icon content).
* Design changes to rendered content (i.e. colors, fonts, layout, etc.).
* Addition of fields to the GIBCT data set (I.e. fields not currently included in GIBCT or additional CSV columns).
* Changes in functionality of GIBCT such as changes in calculator logic.

Please contact the vets.gov project manager (Kelly.O'Connor@va.gov) to request application modifications not covered by the scope of the GIDS application.

# Authentication

A user name and password are required to access GIDS.

## New Users

Access to the GIBCT Data Service (GIDS) is managed through a two part process

1. All users requiring access to GIDS must request access from the EDU project manager (Stephanie Price - [Stephanie.Price3@va.gov](mailto:Stephanie.Price3@va.gov)).
   1. Project manager supplies user Name and VA Email Address of new user.
2. EDU project manager will request that technical access from the GIDS operations representative (Patrick Vinograd – [Patrick.Vinograd@va.gov](mailto:Alex.Yale-Loehr@va.gov))
   1. Digital Service Technical Lead creates and distributes credentials.
   2. Distribution of credentials will be via secure, encrypted method.

## Forgotten Passwords or Password Resets

All requests for password resets or retrieval will be addressed to the GIDS operations representative (Patrick Vinograd – [Patrick.Vinograd@va.gov](mailto:Alex.Yale-Loehr@va.gov))

# Access

GIDS:   
<https://www.vets.gov/gids>

GIBCT:

https://www.vets.gov/gi-bill-comparison-tool

# Using GIDS

The typical workflow available in GIDS is as follows:

1. **Upload one or more new source CSVs.**
2. **Process the new CSVs into institution data by generating a new preview version.**
3. **Validate correctness of the preview version data by looking at GIBCT in preview mode.**
4. **Once validated, publish a new production version to make new data publicly visible in GIBCT.**
5. **(Optional) Export the complete institution data as a .csv for reporting or analysis purposes.**
6. **(Optional) Download one or more previously-uploaded source CSVs.**
7. (Optional) View the complete history of previous upload operations.
8. **Preview** GIDS data changes in a non-public staging environment

IMPORTANT!

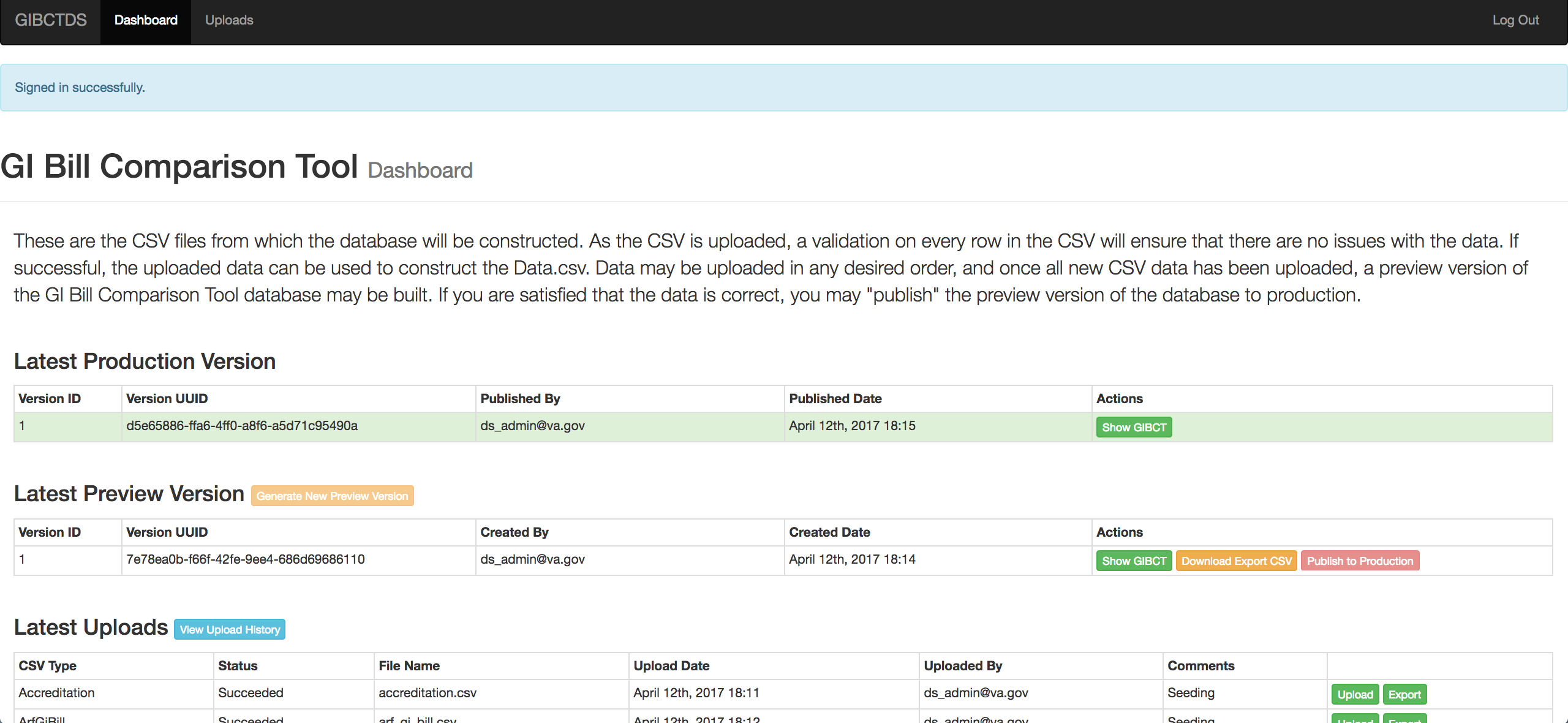
CSV files uploaded to GIDS MUST be in a specific, agreed-upon format. This format has been established based on the formatting of the CSV files aggregated into the legacy Access data base as of April 2017. It is likely that over time, the source CSV files will be altered by the originators of each data set. In some cases it may be necessary to manually edit source CSVs to make them compatible with GIDS, until such time as the tool’s implementation can be updated to accommodate a new format.

## Application Interface

### Dashboard

The dashboard screen provides an overview of the current preview and production data, and the most recent source CSVs of each type. It also provides the ability to perform the most common workflow operations. There are three main sections.

* **Latest Production**: Displays a summary of the current production (publicly viewable) institution data. The summary includes the version number (**Version ID**), an internal identifier (**Version-UUID**), the user that published this version (**Published By**), the date the data was published (**Published Date**), and actions that can be performed on the production data.
* **Latest Preview**: Displays a summary of the most recent preview institution data. The summary includes the version number (**Version ID**), an internal identifier (**Version-UUID**), the user that generated this preview version (**Created By**), the date the data was assembled (**Created Date**), and actions that can be performed on the preview data.
* **Latest Uploads**: This area contains information on the latest uploads for each type of source CSV. There is one row for each CSV type (Weam, Crosswalk, etc.), and each row provides information on the type of CSV (**CSV Type**), the status (**Status**) of the upload - successful or failed, the name of the file (**File Name**), the date it was uploaded (**Upload Date**), the user that uploaded the file (**Uploaded By**), any comments attached to the upload (**Comments**), and actions that can be performed for the source CSV.



### Actions

Latest Production Version

The following actions are available for the current production version:

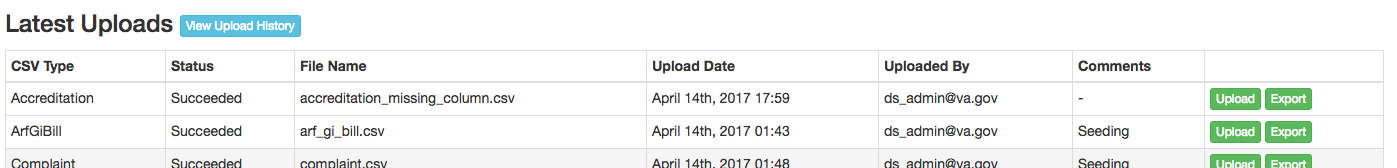
1. The **Show GIBCT** button is a link to GIBCT exactly as it is seen by the public.

Latest Preview Version

The following actions are available for the preview version of the data:

1. The Generate New Preview Version button aggregates and processes the latest uploaded source CSVs of each type to create a new version of the Institution data. *This action is disabled when the current preview version contains all the currently-uploaded CSVs, i.e. when no new source CSVs have been uploaded.*
2. The **Publish to Production** button will enable the current preview data in production, making it publicly viewable. *This action is disabled if the current production version is the same as the current preview version, i.e. if the latest data is already available in production*
3. The **Show GIBCT** button will bring you to the GIBCT application, *running in preview mode*, containing the latest preview data. Preview data is only visible to you and other GIDS users. A banner is displayed at the top of GIBCT in preview mode to make it clear that the data being displayed is not generally visible.
4. The **Download Preview Data** button allows you do download the current preview Institution data as a CSV. **The downloaded file will be saved to your local computer in a location determined by your browser preferences.**

Latest Uploads Section



The following actions are available for each of the latest uploaded CSVs:

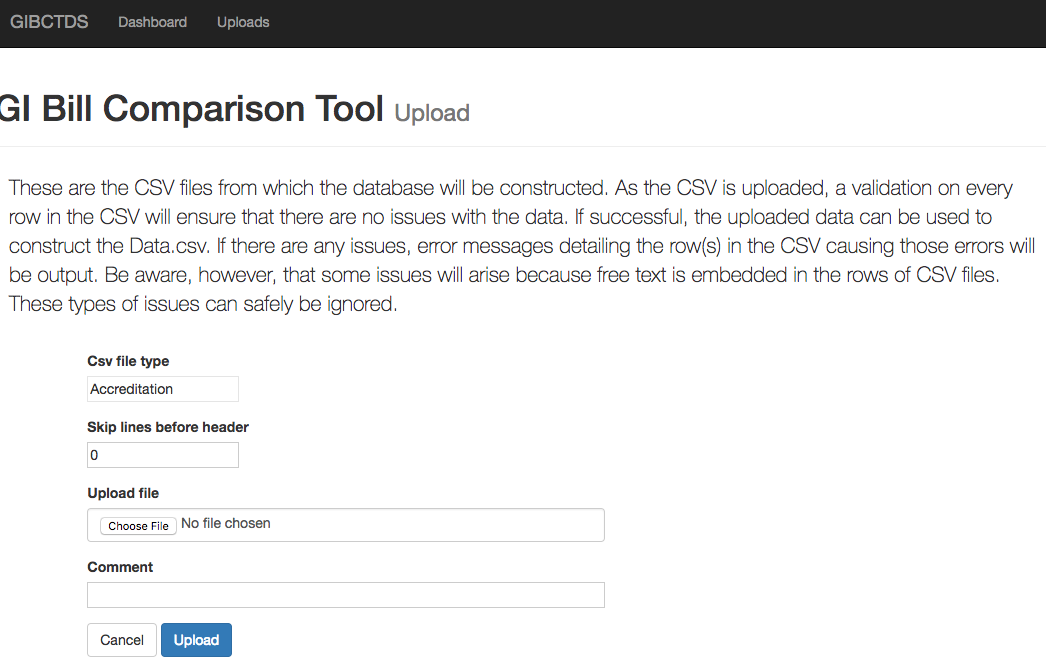
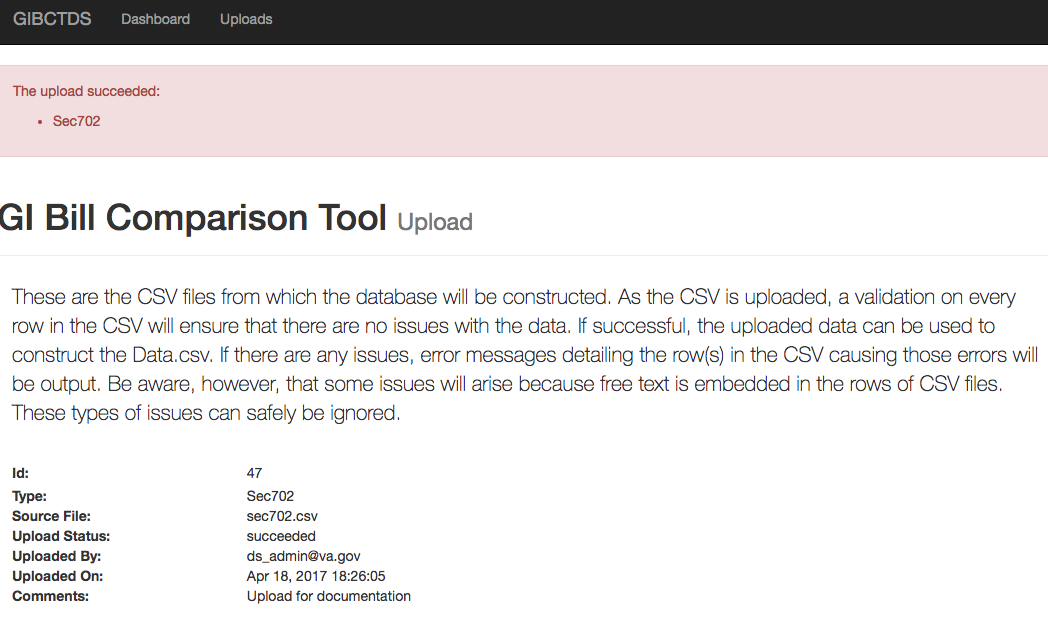
1. **The Upload button lets the user upload a newer version of the given source CSV. Users will be prompted to select a file from their local computer and provide some details about the file (see *Detailed Workflow)* below.**
2. **The Export** button downloads a copy of the given source CSV to the user’s local computer.

Viewing Upload History



The **View Upload History** button allows the user to view the complete CSV upload history to date. This is a history of the: the CSV Type (Weam, Accreditation, …), the status of the upload, the name of the file as it appeared on the local machine when it was uploaded, the date, the person who uploaded the file, and any comments that accompanied the upload.

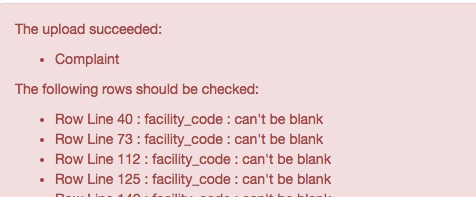
## Detailed Workflow

1. **Before logging into the system**, manually execute any changes to the required CSV file as specifiied by the EDU project manager.
2. Log in to the GIDS.
3. After successfully logging in, the application displays the Dashboard.
4. From the ‘Latest Uploads’ table, identify the file type that you would like to replace.
5. Click on the ‘Upload’ link next to the desired CSV file upload.
6. The Upload CSV file screen will be presented to the user:  
   
   1. In most cases it should only be necessary to choose the correct file from your local computer, and optionally supply a comment describing any pertinent information about this upload.
   2. ‘Skip lines before header’ indicates the number of extraneous lines to skip before the CSV header line. This value is pre-filled for each CSV type based on currently-known standard formatting of each CSV. This value can be changed in case the format of a given CSV changes, e.g. if comment lines at the start of a file are added or removed.
7. Select the required file for upload using your computer’s file navigation system.
8. Click ‘Upload’ to begin the upload process.
9. IMPORTANT! – Many of the source CSVs are very large, containing tens of thousands of records. The contents must be transferred to GIDS, after which some processing of the file occurs. GIDS does not present a progress indicator for the upload, though the user’s browser may provide an indicator that the upload is occurring. THE UPLOAD AND PROCESSING OF THE SOURCE CSV IS NOT COMPLETE UNTIL YOU SEE A MESSAGE SIMILAR TO THIS:  ****In this case, the file uploaded was the ‘sec\_702.csv’.
10. Continue the above steps for each CSV file requiring an update. **(note: it is only necessary to upload files that contain changes. You do not need to upload each CSV file everytime a change is required to one CSV file, only the file(s) containing the changes.)**
11. Once all desired files have been uploaded, generate a new preview version by clicking on the  button in the dashboard.
12. **Validate the newly-generated preview version. View the preview data as it will appear in GIBCT by clicking the button next to the new preview version.** Or, download the preview data as a CSV by clicking the /Users/marcharbatkin/Desktop/Screen Shot 2017-04-18 at 7.29.26 PM.pngbutton next to the new preview version.
13. **Once the preview data has been re**viewed and approved, activate the data in production by clicking the /Users/marcharbatkin/Desktop/Screen Shot 2017-04-18 at 7.32.14 PM.pngbutton in the dashboard.

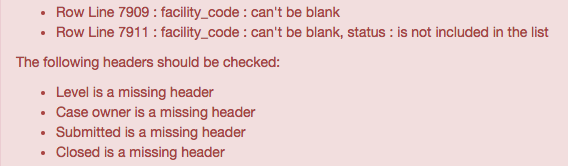
# Troubleshooting

## Interpreting Error Messages

Improperly formatted CSV files, alterations to the text of column headers, extra or missing column headers will trigger a warning handling message during the CSV upload process. Note that unlike prior versions of the data service, valid data will be uploaded if possible. For example, suppose the complaint.csv file being uploaded contained a number of invalid rows, as well as missing errors. Valid rows of complaint data will still be saved, but the data service will alert you that there are issues with some rows that will not be saved:



In this case, the complaint data had rows that were missing facility\_codes. Note that the data service will provide row numbers to help you identify the errant rows. This file also has issues with missing headers.



In this case, the warning lets the user know that several columns were missing, but these missing columns will not affect the integrity of the data. If columns were missing that affected data integrity, the entire upload would be aborted without saving any data.

**Solution:**

In this case, the user should examine the complaint.csv file to (1) check the data in the warning – not all rows in a perfectly valid Csv will have all required data, and (2) review the formatting for the column headers, then manually edit the new complaint file to ensure that the headers are correctly included and formatted.

## White Screen Following CSV Upload Attempt

Do due a variety of VA network considerations, it is possible that an attempt to upload a file will fail. **BEFORE REPORTING THIS ISSUE, IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT SOME OF THE FILE UPLOAD PROCESSES WILL BE TIME CONSUMING.** Some files will require the user to wait up to 10 minutes with no indication of upload progress. If after this time the browser window has changed to a blank, all-white screen, or if the browser has generated a timeout error, consider the following options:

1. Check the latest uploads section of the dashboard and see if the attempted upload succeeded. It is possible for the data transfer to succeed but for the browser to time out during data processing, in which case processing proceeds anyway.
2. If the upload attempt is not reflected in the dashboard, re-try the upload.
3. If further attempts to upload a file fail, seek the assistance of the Digital Service developers and operations teams. These teams can be contacted via the vets.gov project manager (Kelly.O'Connor@va.gov).

## Application Defects

Please report all application defects to the vets.gov project manager (Kelly.O'Connor@va.gov) or create an issue describing the defect on the GIDS GitHub repository, which can be accessed via <https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/gibct-data-service/issues>.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – VA Digital Service Project Contacts

Technical Lead – Kam Karshenas ([kamyar.karshenas@va.gov](mailto:kam.karshenas@va.gov))

Vets.Gov Project Manager – Kelly O’Connor (Kelly.O'Connor@va.gov)

## ­Appendix 2 – Additional Resources

* Public Project Github Repository - <https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/gibct-data-service>
* GIBCT Data Dictionary – <https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/gibct-data-service/blob/master/Data_Management_Artifacts/GIBCT_Data_Dictionary.xlsx>
* GIDS Source Ownership Matrix - <https://github.com/department-of-veterans-affairs/gibct-data-service/blob/master/Data_Management_Artifacts/GIBCT_Data_Ownership.xlsx>