**Department of Veterans Affairs**

**Pledge for Access to and Use of Veterans’ Health Data**

Veterans trust VA to promote and respect their privacy, confidentiality, and autonomy in the services we provide and enable. VA embodies this trust when we adhere to VA’s **I CARE** core values of **I**ntegrity, **C**ommitment, **A**dvocacy, **R**espect, and **E**xcellence. As a learning organization, VA advances Veteran health and wellness by promoting responsible use of Veterans’ data; that is, continuously assuring strong data stewardship practices while using Veterans’ data to advance both Veteran and Public Health. The following principles establish an ethical framework for individuals, groups, or entities inside and outside VA who access and/or use Veterans’ data. Specific clinical, technical, fiscal, regulatory, and industry standards should operate within this ethical framework to ensure the integrity and trustworthiness that Veterans and other stakeholders expect and deserve.

**Principle 1: For the good of Veterans**

Veteran health data is personal and sensitive; access and use should support and improve the delivery of Veteran health and wellness.

**Principle 2: Equity**

Use of Veteran health data should help to promote equity so that no Veteran population is excluded from the benefits of data use because race, color, religion, national origin, Limited English Proficiency (LEP), age, sex (includes gender identity and transgender status), sexual orientation, pregnancy, marital and parental status, political affiliation, disability, or genetic information.

**Principle 3: Meaningful choice**

Sharing of Veterans’ health data – by VA or non-VA parties accessing VA health data – for purposes other than treatment, payment, health care operations, or meeting legal requirements, should be based on the Veteran’s meaningful choice to permit sharing their information for that purpose. Timely, clear, relevant, concise, complete, and comprehensible information must be provided to the Veteran to serve as a basis for their free and informed choice.

**Principle 4: Transparency**

Access to and exchange of VA patient data should be transparent and consistent, and in accord with practices described in VA’s Notice of Privacy Practices. Data should only be accessed by VA or other parties for approved, and/or specified purposes; there should be no un-specified use, or re-use of Veterans’ data. Re-release of Veteran data for purposes other than treatment, payment, health care operations, or to meet legal requirements should require a commitment of the new party/entity to follow this pledge. Failure to assure such protections is a breach of Veteran trust and confidentiality.

**Principle 5: Principled de-identification**

Parties who receive Veterans’ de-identified data should not attempt to reidentify the data in any manner without prior authorization; unauthorized reidentification is a breach of Veteran trust and confidentiality.

**Principle 6: Reciprocal obligation for Veteran data use**

Financial gain or health innovation resulting from use of Veterans’ data creates an obligation of reciprocity to share this gain with Veterans, or Veterans organizations and causes. At a minimum, any secondary benefits to users of VA data, as well as resulting contributions to Veterans and/or VA, should be publicly disclosed.

**Principle 7: Obligation to ensure data security, quality, integrity**

Parties who send, receive, or use Veterans’ data must assure data security, quality, and integrity; that is, that the data remains secure, accurate, complete, and representative of the data quality and integrity accessed from VA.

**Principle 8: Veteran access to their own information**

Veterans should have user-friendly access to their own electronic health information.

**Principle 9: Veteran right to request amendment to their own information**

Veterans should be able to exercise their right to request amendments to their information if they feel it is inaccurate, incomplete, or not relevant to their health or wellness.

**I/WE PLEDGE TO ACT WITH INTEGRITY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE ETHICAL PRINCIPLES SET FORTH HEREIN.**

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_DATED: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

CONCERNING THE FOLLOWING DATA ACCESS AND USE: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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