VistA Office Patch Process Guide

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Department of Veterans Affairs

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Enterprise Program Management Office

Health Services Portfolio

VistA Office

Revision History

Date	Version	Description	Author
October 2020	1.0	Initial Draft	Vanessa Davis
March 2021	1.1	Initial Published Version	VistA Office

Table of Contents

Background and Purpose

The Veterans Information Systems Technology Architecture (VistA) System is being updated to enable integration with the new Electronic Health Record (EHR), with a deployment plan to implement by site over the course of several years. As such, Change Control is required to ensure the ongoing sustainment and interoperability for all VistA sites for as long as the System is needed.

The VistA Office (VO) Change Management team, in conjunction with the Office of Technical Integration (OTI), the Office of Electronic Health Record Modernization (OEHRM), Cerner, Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and other Office of Information Technology (OIT) stakeholders have developed the following guidance that is to be followed during the Cerner Millennium Electronic Health Record Modernization (EHRM) implementation. These procedures are to be followed for VistA patch testing and release, and the installation of all software patches, including integrated Commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) products, for VistA sites which are in process of transitioning during designated change freeze periods ("freeze periods"). A successful and secure patch deployment is essential in maintaining an accurate database and reducing potential risks to patient data and continuity of operations.

Audience

The audience of this document is far reaching. The audience includes anyone who has a stake in the VOCM Patch process and is responsible for a portion of the patching process from intake to install. The following organizations will have a major stake in the successful handling of the VistA patch review process, Office of Electronic Health Records Modernization, Cerner, Enterprise Program Management Office, VistA Office, DevSecOps, Enterprise Testing Services, and Veterans Health Administration.

Scope

This document provides a narrative description of the procedures required to engage with the VO Change Control Board (VOCCB) for the review and approval of national VistA patches during freeze periods. The document also references intersecting processes which are required for overall patch testing, release, and installation. This document provides a summary of the steps which are included in the VOCCB Share Point intake form, **VistA Patch Decision Review Form,** and is designed to work in concert with intersecting development, release and deployment guidance which is listed in appendix.

Roles and Responsibilities

VistA Office Change Management Team (VOCM)

It is the responsibility of the VOCM to:
- Maintain VO Patch Review request Share Point site to ensure current information and status is available
- Provide management and oversight of the VOCCB
- Monitor the overall VO Patch Process and makes improvements when warranted
- Manage VistA components of the VA Document Library (VDL), Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Database-Integration Change Request (DBA-ICR), and Information Assurance (IA).

VistA Office Change Control Board (VOCCB)

It is the responsibility of the VOCCB to:
- Request that Project Managers (PM)s submit a Vista Patch Decision Form for all national VistA patches
- Review Patch intake requests
- Recommend action on requests
- Communicate Change Request decisions to stakeholders
- Support the processing of freeze site VistA patches until they are approved
- Observe the function and roles outlined in the VOCCB Charter
- Align with Office of Electronic Health Records Modernization (OEHRM) documents found in the appendix
- Issue patch change freeze communications for transitioning Cerner sites that are responsive to ITOPS bullets and Office of Health Informatics (OHI) Memorandums. (See example below)

Enterprise Change Advisory Board (CAB)

The Enterprise CAB is composed of Stakeholders from all areas within OIT and VA Product Lines. The Enterprise CAB is primarily responsible to:
- Review and Authorize all Normal and Emergency Change Requests entered into ServiceNow
- Validate VOCCB approval on the VOCCB Patch decision page for all VISTA patching changes

- Escalate ALL High/Critical Risk/Impact changes to CAB for review
- During a change freeze window, escalate non-exempt changes for CAB review
- Provide link to VOCCB patch decision page on Change Freeze FAQ page
- Provide Enterprise Change Control Management Policy link: Enterprise Change Management Policy

- Send OEHRM CM freeze notification email for each transitioning site 2 weeks prior to and 2 weeks post freeze
- Send notification of freeze dates, site details, purpose, protected/non-protected systems, interfaces, and patches

Health Services Portfolio (HSP) Application Coordinators (AC) (formerly Health Product Support (HSP) Application Coordinators (AC))

It is the responsibility of HSP AC to:

- Work with software development teams at the point of Initial Operating Capability (IOC) following Veteran-Focused Integration Process (VIP) processes.
- Review/approve all pertinent release documentation
- Follow all current patch release processes
- Approve/Disapproval testing timeline waivers
- Attend OEHRM/Cerner patch testing calls

Project Manager/Requestor

It is the responsibility of the Project Manager/Requester including OEHRM Technology Integration Office (TIO) Application Transition Team (ATT), Cerner and OIT PM's to:
- Submit the VistA Patch Decision Form to the VistA Office Change Control Board
- Follow all current patch development and release processes

DevSecOps/Infrastructure Operations (IO) (ITOPS)

DevOps is a methodology aiming at establishing closer collaboration between programmers and system administrators in the software development process. DevSecOps is the philosophy of integrating security practices within the DevOps process.

Infrastructure Operations is responsible to:
- Ensure all VistA patches have been pre-approved by the VOCCB prior to implementation and installation
- Install all patches that have been approved by the VOCCB at the site
- **Enter a change request in ServiceNow** with patch number, location and VistA Patch Decision Form ID number, once approved by the VOCCB
- If required, attends CAB meeting to review change for potential impact. During the OEHRM CM freeze period, ensure patches placed on hold are not installed
- Adhere to all Veteran-Focused Integration Process (VIP) processes and guidance
- Issue a freeze bulletin to communicate the Black-Out period for transitioning to Cerner sites (see example in references)

Enterprise Testing Service (ETS)

Enterprise Testing is responsible to:
- Install the VistA patch into the ETS Test Center (ETSTC) end-to-end test environment
- If requested by VOCCB, tests the interfaces and functional intersections with Cerner Millennium (EHRM testing) for compatibility with the VistA patch in the ETSTC test environment
- Update the VistA Patch Decision Form with the results of VistA patch installation in the ETSTC test environment
- Report ETS EHRM testing results in the VistA Patch Decision Form
- Maintain a seat at VOCCB review meetings

Types of Patches

National Patch

A national patch is released and installed at all VistA instances. The standard compliance timeline for VistA site installation of nationally released patches is 30 days. When a site is preparing for transition a notification for nationally released patch freeze dates will be provided via an e-mail from DevSecOps approximately 30 days in advance of the freeze. In addition to the dates of the freeze, these notifications will provide details of the site, purpose, protected/non-protected systems, interfaces, and patches.

Unreleased Cerner Site Specific Patches

These types of patches are specifically for pilot programs or interface development and not released at the national level. These patches are supported and sustained by the pilot program team until all sites have transitioned to Cerner Millennium. Due to the nature of the Cerner Millennium roll out, it became necessary for specific patches to be developed for cut-over activities during transition. OEHRM/Cerner will support and maintain these patches until all sites have transitioned to the new EHR. These patches will be left as "Under Development" in Forum until the patches are no longer needed. These patches will then be changed to a "Cancelled" status in Forum.

Emergency Patch

Emergency patches are created to address patient safety issues and time-sensitive table updates. All sites have 3-5 business days to get these patches installed.

Informational Patch

An informational patch provides detailed instructions for something to be completed. This includes:
- Installation of a new GUI
- Setting up file parameters

Commercial Off the Shelf Patch

Commercial Off the Shelf products (COTS) are purchased by individual VA Medical Centers or purchased at the VA Enterprise level. COTS applications reside on the VA public network with a VistA interface that actively transmits data between the application and VistA via HL7. All COTS purchases must be Technical Reference Model (TRM) compliant and all new COTS purchases follow the Veteran Focused Integration Process Request (VIPR) process. If the COTS product does have an interface to VistA, it must be reviewed and approved by the DevSecOps/Infrastructure Operations/COTS Division.

Class 1 Patch

Nationally released OIT EPMO VistA software including all interfaces installed on or interacting with VA computing environments. National Software has been created by or evaluated and certified by EPMO and/or DevSecOps to comply with VA established criteria Veteran-Focused Integration Process (VIP).

Class 2 Patch

Represents a Class III product that has been verified as compliant with established OIT National standards. These are products coming out of field development (FD) and are certified and approved for Class II deployment and follow-on support by Field Development (FD).

Class 3 Patch

Products originating from any non-EPMO source including field developers, non-IT VA staff (e.g., physicians), vendors, open source, research, or educational organizations located on or supporting a VA Medical Center (VAMC)-specific VistA instance. These software products generally have a limited and non-standardized distribution across VA systems and are not covered by OIT EPMO support commitments.

Process and Procedures

VistA Patch Review Process

The primary function of VistA Office Change Control Board is to provide a review and approval pathway for VistA patches to ensure that they will not generate negative impacts to the VistA and Cerner Millennium Health Information System (HIS) environments at VHA sites that are in "freeze" status (a period of time surrounding the Cerner Millennium cutover date where the VistA code base is frozen for updates) and at sites that have completed conversion ("Cerner Converted" sites). These review and approval processes run in parallel with the existing review and approval processes already in place for VistA patches for "legacy" sites.

Figure 1: VistA Patch Review Process shows the summary level view of the VOCM VistA patch review process.

Figure 1: VistA Patch Review Process
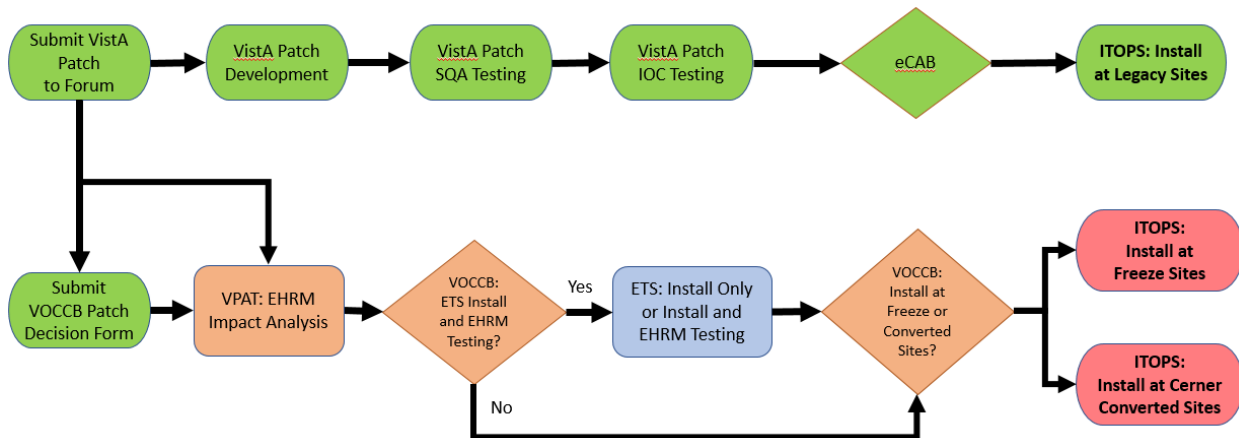
Records Management

For each site, various FORUM Patch reports will be used as a baseline during the OEHRM CM Freeze period. The reports include

- Patches installed at transitioning site 30 days prior to freeze date
- Current test patches running at the site
- Uninstalled patches at the site

All FORUM reports will be stored in the OEHRM Freeze Sites folder located at OEHRM Freeze Sites.

A copy of the VA-OIT DevSecOps EHRM Cerner Millennium Change Freeze Memo for each site will be uploaded to the appropriate site folder located at OEHRM Freeze Sites.

References

The VA-OIT DevSecOps EHRM Cerner Millennium Change Freeze Bulletin will serve as a reference for each site. This memo will list freeze dates, site, purpose, protected/non-protected systems, interfaces, and patches to be applied.

[Example DevSecOps Bulletin.docx (sharepoint.com)](sharepoint.com)

Other records and process documentation can be found at the following sites:

- Change Control for Production Environment: [Enterprise Change Control Process Document (SOP)](#)
- [Enterprise Change, Release, and Configuration (ECRC) Public Documents](#)
- Service Catalog General Request for Enterprise System: [Work Instruction – How to Submit Change Control General Request](#)
- General change freeze FAQs: [Change Freeze FAQ Page](#)
- Cerner Millennium Go Live Information: [Example DevSecOps Bulletin](#)
- Information on patches for upcoming conversion sites: [Example Of CPRS Patch Memo](#)
- VistA Patch Review and Analysis Process: [OEHRM VistA Patch Analysis Process](#)