<u>Manual M-11, Information Resources Management (Veterans Health Administration)</u>

Chapter 6, Telecommunications
        (Paragraphs 6.01 through 6.05)

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**DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS**

INFORMATION RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

M-11
January 17, 1995

**Veterans Health Administration
Washington, DC 20420**

January 17, 1995

The Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration Manual M-11, "Medical Information Resources Management," is published for the information and compliance of all concerned.

Kenneth W. Kizer, M.D., M.P.H.
Under Secretary for Health

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CHAPTER 6. TELECOMMUNICATIONS

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6.01 PURPOSE

a. The purpose of this chapter is to define the responsibility for managing and administering telecommunications resources within Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and to define telecommunications standards for VHA use.

b. The growth of telecommunications standards has been extensive in recent years, particularly in the area of Open Systems Interconnection (OSI).

(1) OSI is a collection of international standards that are intended to promote the interconnectivity and interoperability of multi-vendor computer environments.

(2) The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has recognized the need for major information systems within VA to exchange information in order to maximize capabilities and streamline information flow.

6.02 POLICY

a. The primary inter-facility data communications system for VHA is a packet switching network referred to as Integrated Data Communications Utility (IDCU).

b. The use of leased lines for inter-facility data communications will be discouraged in any area in which the Department packet switching network can be utilized.

c. Access to the IDCU system will be provided to each VHA health care facility. **NOTE:** *Network access policies are addressed in subparagraph 16. 09b.*

d. The vehicle for national electronic communications within VHA is FORUM, which utilizes Kernel's electronic mail program.

e. Access to FORUM will be provided to VHA health care facility and VA Central Office personnel. FORUM access will be provided to other Agency and non-Agency personnel in accordance with M-11, paragraph 16.09.

f. VHA will migrate in a timely and orderly fashion to OSI communications standards once they are adopted as Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS). In the interim, VHA will include, based on performance and cost/benefit evaluations:

(1) OSI,

(2) Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP),

(3) Government Open Systems Interconnection Profile (GOSIP), and

(4) Other protocols in future procurements.

g. Acquisition of information systems will be evaluated on the basis of each proposed system's ability to communicate with and exchange data with existing VA information systems.

h. Telecommunications capabilities at VHA facilities will be evaluated and upgraded based on facility needs and network capabilities.

6.03 DEFINITIONS

a. VA Automation Center, Austin, TX (AAC)

(1) The AAC maintains applications which are utilized by VHA. The applications include:

(a) Centralized Accounting for Local Management (CALM);

(b) Automated Management Information Systems (AMIS); and.

(c) Personnel Accounting Integrated Data (PAID).

(d) LOG I.

(2) Facilities access the AAC through IDCU or dial-up modems for remote logins and file transfers. Applications for access to the AAC should be referred to that site.

b. **FORUM.** FORUM is a system developed and maintained to provide a national communications system for use within VHA.

(1) FORUM includes the:

(a) MailMan System;

(b) Decentralized Hospital Computer Program (DHCP) Patch System; and

(c) DHCP Tracking Systems for implementation, hardware, and facility Automated Data Processing (ADP) plans.

(2) FORUM is intended for use by:

(a) Information Resources Management (IRM) personnel (e.g., IRM Service Chiefs and staff),

(b) Application coordinators,

(c) User group members,

(d) Medical Information Resources Management Office (MIRMO),

(e) Regional Directors, and

(f) Health care facility Directors.

(3) FORUM is available for VHA related business use by other VA personnel and other federal agencies under FORUM access control and audit trail mechanisms, (M-11, subpar. 16.09).

(4) FORUM is accessible via IDCU.

c. **IDCU.** IDCU is the private packet switching network that provides the Department with a nationwide inter-facility data communications system.

(1) IDCU can support asynchronous, synchronous, or bisynchronous transmission protocols, and terminal and host data transfer rates ranging from 300 to 19,200 bits per second (BPS)

(2) Access to IDCU network requires a:

(a) Physical connection,

(b) Valid host number, and

(c) Valid password.

d. **OSI.** OSI is a collection of international standards developed by the International Standards Organization for the promotion of interconnectivity and interoperability of multi-vendor computer environments.

e. **TCP/IP.** TCP/IP, developed by the Department of Defense (DOD), is a subset of the capabilities needed to communicate on a network. OSI is expected to replace TCP/IP.

6.04 RESPONSIBILITIES

a. The Director, Technology Management Service, MIRMO, conducts strategic planning for future VHA telecommunications needs and coordinates support of new and replacement VA health care facility networks between:

(1) The Office of Telecommunications,

(2) Office of Information Resources Management (OIRM),

(3) VHA, and

(4) Field personnel.

b. Each Director, Information Systems Center(ISC), shall ensure that the telecommunications needs of facilities within their respective region are periodically assessed.

c. The Chief, IRM Service, serves as the health care facility IDCU point-of-contact with the IDCU Office of Telecommunications, OIRM, and coordinates facility access to IDCU, FORUM, and AAC.

6.05 PROCEDURES

a. Requests for access to IDCU will be submitted to the Director, MIRMO. Evaluation of requests will be based on the availability of equipment and on the impact on network traffic.

b. The facility IDCU point-of-contact will submit to the Office of Telecommunications, OIRM:

(1) Additional IDCU host numbers,

(2) Capacity expansions, and/or

(3) Service modifications.

c. Facility requests for new or expanded OIRM services with estimated project costs greater than $10,000 will be routed through the Director, MIRMO.

d. Requests for access to FORUM by health care facility personnel shall be forwarded to the Chief, IRM Service, who shall submit an electronic message to the REQUEST ACCESS mail group on the FORUM system.

(1) The request shall contain the:

(a) Name(s) of the requestor(s),

(b) Organizational affiliation,

(c) Title(s),

(d) Telephone number(s), and

(e) Functions needed.

(2) An access and verify code will be assigned and conveyed to the new user(s) according to appropriate security procedures (refer to Ch. 16).

e. For access to FORUM by other personnel, a written request should be sent to the Director, Washington ISC.

(1) The request shall contain the:

(a) Name(s) of the requestor(s),

(b) Organizational affiliation,

(c) Title(s),

(d) Telephone number(s), and

(e) Functions needed.

(2) An access and verify code will be assigned and conveyed to the new user(s) according to appropriate security procedures (refer to Ch. 16).

Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Washington, DC 20420

M-11
Chapter 6

January 17, 1995

1. Transmitted is a new chapter to the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Manual, M-11, "Information Resources Management," Chapter 6, "Telecommunications."

2. Chapter 6 defines the responsibility for managing and administering VHA telecommunications resources.

3. **Filing Instructions**

Remove pages	**Insert pages**
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4. **RESCISSIONS:** VHA Circulars/Directives 10-85-93, 10-85-112, 10-85-116, 10-86-147, 10-87-19, 10-87-119, 10-87-122, and 10-87-123.

Kenneth W. Kizer, M.D., M.P.H.
Under Secretary for Health

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1. Transmitted is a new manual to the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration Manuals, M-11, "Information Resources Management," Chapters 1 through 17. **NOTE:** *Due to the length of this part, each Chapter will be transmitted separately.*

2. The principal changes include:

    a. **Chapter 1:** Defines the over arching Information Resource Management (IRM) policy and the responsibilities of various offices, committees, and directorates for carrying out policy.

    b. **Chapter 2:** Describes and provides procedures for the IRM planning and acquisition process.

    c. **Chapter 3:** Sets forth Veterans Health Administration (VHA) policy relating to data administration and reports management, including reports control procedures.

    d. **Chapter 4:** Establishes policy for the management of VHA's database, and procedures for design integrity and overall conformance to programming goals and standards.

    e. **Chapter 5:** Establishes policy and guidance for the procurement of office automation equipment and software as part of VHA's health care information systems.

    f. **Chapter 6:** Defines the responsibility for managing and administering VHA telecommunications resources.

    g. **Chapter 7:** Provides guidance concerning the role of technology assessment as it relates to the management and operation of medical information systems.

    h. **Chapter 8:** Defines the role and responsibility of Applications Requirements Groups in the development, design, and maintenance of VHA Decentralized Hospital Computer Program software.

    i. **Chapter 9:** Sets forth the VHA policy regarding software management standards and requirements for the development, maintenance, and support of all software packages designated for national distribution.

    j. **Chapter 10:** Describes and provides procedures for the IRM planning and acquisition process.

    k. **Chapter 11:** Defines application documentation, documentation standards, and management of documentation of all VHA software.

    l. **Chapter 12:** Establishes policy and procedures related to ensuring the quality of VHA developed software.

    m. **Chapter 13:** Provides policy and guidance governing the archiving and purging of data from the VHA computer systems to ensure the ability to store current data in the system.

    n. **Chapter 14:** Establishes policy for the provision of support to VHA facilities for the acquisition, implementation, and maintenance of automated hospital information systems to increase the effectiveness and quality of patient care.

    o. **Chapter 15:** Establishes policy and responsibilities for training to support VHA IRM activities, both at the local and national level.

p. **Chapter 16:** Provides policy and procedures to ensure the protection of data, hardware, software, and storage media.

q. **Chapter 17:** Establishes operational guidelines for and defines the responsibilities of IRM Service, which unifies automated data processing, telecommunications, office automation, information collection, information management, and systems development.

3. Filing Instructions

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4. RESCISSIONS: VHA Circulars/Directives 10-85-93, 10-85-112, 10-85-116, 10-86-147, 10-87-19, 10-87-119, 10-87-122, and 10-87-123.

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