NATIONAL VistA SUPPORT (NVS) FOR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Handbook establishes policy for the provision of support to VHA facilities for the planning, implementation, operation and maintenance of health information systems and technology to increase the effectiveness and quality of patient care delivery.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES: Significant changes in this policy include:

　　a. Impacts made by the reorganization of the Office of Information (OI) in support of information technology (IT) at VHA facilities.

　　b. Description of the role of OI NVS staff in assisting VHA health care facilities and Information Resource Management staff.

　　c. Procedures to be followed to request NVS IT assistance.

3. RELATED DIRECTIVE: VHA Directive 1900 dated January 26, 1999.

4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: The Office of the Associate Chief Information Officer for Customer Support (193) is responsible for the contents of this Handbook.

5. **DOCUMENT RESCINDED:** M-11, Chapter 14.

6. RECERTIFICATION: This document is scheduled for recertification on or before the last day of July 2006.

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Thomas L. Garthwaite, M.D.
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Under Secretary for Health

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1. PURPOSE. This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Handbook establishes policy for the provision of support to VHA facilities for the planning, implementation, operation, and maintenance of health information systems and technology to increase the effectiveness and quality of patient care delivery.

2. AUTHORITY

a. The mission of the NVS Division of Customer Support is to function as a customer-oriented organization, delivering high quality, cost effective information products and support in support of veterans health care.

b. VHA's Office of Information (OI), Customer Support (NVS Division) is responsible for providing a full range of support to the Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture (VistA). Support provided to VHA health care facilities include the following:

(1) Design and technical support to VHA facilities and Information Resources Management (IRM) staffs in planning, implementation and maintenance of VistA.

(2) Technical support, advice, and consultation to users for both VistA hardware and software related questions and problems. The latter include troubleshooting, analysis, and resolution of problems and issues.

(3) After hours coverage for emergency situations available 24-hours per day, seven days per week.

(4) Connectivity to VHA's automated information systems and technologies located in the field.

(5) Technical and functional expertise and recommendations for solutions to VA-provided data communication networks.

(6) Support for database administration and information sharing.

(7) Development, maintenance, and acquisition of information technology (IT) solutions to improve VHA business processes and products.

(8) Maintenance and support of the national FORUM mail system and the national Microsoft Exchange network to facilitate national mail service.

(9) Maintenance of electronic software and documentation repositories.

(10) Operation of the OI National Help Desk (NHD) for logging, tracking, and managing support requests and problems related to VistA products and support.

(11) Operation and maintenance of a comprehensive call and problem management system to ensure that reported problems are resolved in a timely and satisfactory fashion.

(12) Customer feedback surveys to determine quality of support provided to VHA facilities.

(13) Ongoing refinement of support designed to meet or exceed established customer service expectations.

(14) Technical support and overall project coordination for the integration of VHA field facility databases including the development, support, and maintenance of National Database Integration (NDBI) software applications and utilities.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. The Associate Chief Information Officer (ACIO) for Customer Support is responsible for policy guidance and for oversight of the NVS Division of Customer Support.

b. Directors, NVS, are responsible for managing NVS resources and ensuring effective technical and operational support, assistance, and guidance are provided to all VHA health care facilities and IRM staffs, as follows:

(1) Identification and resolution of problems.

(2) Maintenance and upgrading of operating systems and hardware.

(3) Installation and implementation of verified software.

(4) Provision of VISN and facility management evaluations of IRM support as requested.

(5) Allocation of NVS resources to ensure that all verified software packages are supported.

(6) Adherence to established procedures for problem tracking, management, and resolution.

(7) Guidance in the planning for IT resource acquisition.

(8) Support for system optimization and capacity management.

(9) Support of IRM-related training by providing faculty and/or support for training initiatives sponsored by OI, the national training office, or VA health care facilities.

(10) Evaluation, planning, acquisition, implementation, operation, and management of hospital information systems.

c. VHA IRM staffs at the health care facility level are responsible for reporting support requests or problems to the OI NHD. ***NOTE:*** *Support requests and problems may be logged by IRM staff directly into the national support/problem management system operated by NVS and the NHD, or by the NHD staff.* Facility IRM staff shall:

(1) Document all software and hardware aspects, to the extent possible, regarding the problem prior to contacting NVS for assistance. Software malfunction reports will include:

(a) A description of the problem, including prompts displayed and data entries made prior to the malfunction.

(b) Menu options selected, and the functional order involved.

(c) Screen captures or printed examples, if available.

(d) Software or hardware error conditions, and error trap information, if available.

(e) Information pertaining to software or hardware upgrades, installations, or modifications.

(2) Provide NVS personnel with temporary access to the facility computer system, as needed, for problem resolution. Support personnel will be subject to all security regulations and policies.

4. PROCEDURES

a. OI NHD analysts must log all support requests and problems into the national support/problem management system for resolution by NVS specialists:

(1) Support requests and problem logs must be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that requests have been resolved in a timely and satisfactory fashion.

(2) Regular updates to support requests and problem logs must be made to maintain current records and on-going work history.

(3) The data collected through the national support/problem management system must be used to prepare periodic reports according to the guidelines set forth by OI management. Reports must be distributed to the ACIO for Customer Support and Directors for NVS. Reports must be distributed to VISN and facility IRM staffs in accordance with guidelines set forth in service level agreements (SLAs).

b. Support requests and problems reported must be prioritized in accordance with guidelines set forth in NVS standard operating procedures (SOPs) and SLAs.

c. Response time and resolution timeframes will be based on the priority of the support request/problem. There must be adherence to the timeframes established in NVS SOPs and SLAs.

d. On-site support must be provided as appropriate and when requested by health care facility management.

e. NVS must provide VHA health care facilities access to verified software and related documentation, as well as remote assistance for software installation and implementation.

f. Facility IRM staff must back-up the database and review release notes and installation instructions prior to installing software.

(1) Software must be loaded into a test account whose set-up parameters match those of the production environment. Failure to use a test production environment initially increases the risk of causing damage to a production environment.

(2) Facility IRM staff and the appropriate applications coordinator must review the package in the test environment to validate performance.

(3) Upon successful completion of the installation process, the package must be installed and initialized in the production account.

g. Evaluation and assistance with computer capacity and tuning issues including, but not limited to, efficiency monitoring must be provided by NVS upon request.

h. Temporary work around solutions must be provided by NVS or other OI staff to circumvent serious problems until a formalized resolution is made available. When the resolution requires an enhancement or patch to a national software package, NVS staff must notify the software developer via national support/problem management system.

i. Corrections to nationally-released software (bug fixes) must be made by software developers in the form of patches. Nationally-released software patches will be distributed to VHA medical facilities by NVS.

(1) A central registry of patches must be kept current in the National Patch Module on FORUM.

(2) Emergency patches must be implemented within 24 hours, and all other patches must be implemented within 30 working days of receipt.

j. Requests for enhancements to VistA software received by NVS must be forwarded to OI Systems Design and Development for review and disposition.

k. IRM management and technical reviews must be provided at the request of VISN and/or facility management. Reviews will be conducted by NVS Directors. The Director may be accompanied by application and/or technical support specialists, which will be determined by the scope of the management or technical review requested.

l. Results of user surveys and feedback must be used to improve service and manage customer expectations.