



**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

Office of Public Affairs
Media Relations

Washington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
www.va.gov

News Release

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VA Identifies Problem with a Transcription Services Contract

WASHINGTON – During a routine internal inspection, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) discovered a contractor providing medical transcription services who was not following the Department’s rules for protecting medical information.

Although there is no evidence that any patient information was disclosed as a result of the violation, VA has suspended the contractor from receiving any sensitive information from the Department until the contractor guarantees compliance with VA’s standards for information technology (IT) security.

“VA insists that contractors, as well as our own personnel, adhere to the highest standards for protecting personal information,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “When we detect a problem, as happened in this case, we will quickly fix it, and we will ensure such problems are not happening elsewhere.”

The issue involves a contractor whose employees create written transcripts of recordings made by health care professionals while performing physical examinations, reporting on surgeries, and taking patients’ histories. VA officials found the contractor’s employees used computers that do not adhere to government policy on security.

Based on this incident, the Secretary has launched an intensive examination of all VA’s contracts to ensure all contractors properly safeguard information about VA patients, Veterans and employees.

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