

Department of Veterans Affairs

Under Secretary for Health

Veterans Health Administration

Washington, DC 20420

November 17, 1994

VHA MEMORANDUM

NO. 10-94-006

### FORMAT AND USE OF FACT SHEETS

1. **PURPOSE:** This Under Secretary memorandum replaces Chief Medical Director (CMD) Memorandum 10-92-010 and provides format and policy for fact sheets in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA).

2. **POLICY:** A fact sheet is a stand-alone document that contains complex or detailed medical, technical, or scientific information. It is also used to respond to numerous inquiries on a specific issue. In addition, a fact sheet is used when the signer of the correspondence would not necessarily have in-depth, first-hand knowledge of the subject matter. It is used as an attachment to a memorandum for internal Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) correspondence and an enclosure to a letter for recipients outside VA. A fact sheet is often referred to as a white paper when it is developed for internal VA dissemination.

### 3. BACKGROUND

a. Previous directives established a distinction between a fact sheet and a white paper: a fact sheet was generally intended for recipients outside VA and a white paper was intended primarily for distribution inside VA, and the formats were slightly different. To simplify the procedures and format, only the fact sheet format will be used.

b. A fact sheet conveys information in a logical, understandable order in language that is appropriate for the intended audience. The length and content is governed by the subject matter and the need to provide the recipient a clear understanding of the topic under consideration.

c. A fact sheet is a response from VA as an organization not an individual; therefore, it should not be written in the first person.

d. Fact sheets are prepared to serve a variety of purposes.

(1) A fact sheet is commonly used to present technical information and program details not suited to the narrative description normally found in a letter or memorandum. Generally, the higher the signature level, the less appropriate it would be to include complex details in a letter or memorandum.

(2) It is used to respond to multiple inquiries on a particular subject.

(3) A fact sheet may be requested to explain a particular issue.

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e. The first paragraph of a fact sheet that is written in response to an incoming letter should identify the writer of the letter, the person the letter is written about (on behalf of), and should explain the issue.

#### 4. ACTION

a. Use the following format for a fact sheet.

(1) Use plain bond paper. Begin six lines from the top of the page, center, in all capital letters, the name of the Department and directly below that the name of the Administration followed by the respective acronym in parenthesis. Insert one blank line, and center the title of the fact sheet.

Example:

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA)

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (VHA)

#### Fact Sheet Format

(2) The text is single-spaced, with one blank line between paragraphs. Headings and subtitles are encouraged.

(3) The first paragraph explains why the document is being written, i.e., to discuss a particular issue or to respond to a request for information.

(4) The second page of a fact sheet should have the page number typed six lines from the top of the page at the left margin, insert one blank line and at the left margin, type the title (exactly as it appears on page one.)

(5) At the bottom of the page at the left margin, type the originator's mail routing symbol and directly below that, type the month and year the document was prepared.

b. Fact sheets should be routed through appropriate organizational channels. A fact sheet prepared for the Under Secretary for Health should be transmitted by memorandum or Optional Form 41, Routing and Transmittal Slip, signed by the Associate Deputy CMD, or appropriate Associate CMD. A fact sheet which provides information to someone outside the Department should be accompanied by a transmittal letter prepared for the signature of the Under Secretary for Health, Secretary, or other appropriate official.

5. REFERENCES: MP-1, Part II, Chapter 10.

6. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITY: Director, Office of Executive Correspondence (101B).

7. RESCISSIONS: CMD Memorandum 10-92-010, dated August 25, 1992. This Under Secretary for Health Memorandum will expire November 17, 1997.

S/Dennis Smith 11/17/94 for

Kenneth W. Kizer, M.D., M.P.H

Under Secretary for Health

Attachment

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#### ATTACHMENT A

Example of a Fact Sheet Format

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA)

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (VHA)

Title: Brief, Descriptive Title of Fact Sheet

Issue: Update of VHA policy on the format and use of a fact sheet.

Discussion: The purpose of this document is to establish format and policy for fact sheets. A fact sheet is a stand-alone document that contains complex or detailed medical, technical, or scientific information. It is also used to respond to numerous inquiries on a specific issue. In addition to the above criteria, a fact sheet is used when the signer of the correspondence would not necessarily have in depth first-hand knowledge of the subject matter. It is used as an attachment to a memorandum for internal VA correspondence and an enclosure to a letter for recipients outside VA. A fact sheet is often referred to as a white paper when it is developed for internal VA dissemination.

Format: The following format is used for fact sheets:

- a. Use plain bond paper. Begin six lines from the top of the page, center, in all capital letters, the name of the Department and directly below that the name of the Administration followed by the respective acronym in parenthesis. Insert one blank line, and center the title of the fact sheet.
- b. The text is single-spaced, with one blank line between paragraphs. Headings and subtitles are encouraged.
- c. The first paragraph explains why the document is being written, i.e., to discuss a particular issue or to respond to a request for information.
- d. The second page of a fact sheet should have the page number typed six lines from the top of the page at the left margin, insert one blank line and at the left margin, type the title (exactly as it appears on page one.)
- e. At the bottom of the page at the left margin, type the originator's mail routing symbol and directly below that type the month and year the document was prepared. Example:

101B

October 1994

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