

June 27, 2006

## COOPERATION WITH THE OFFICE OF THE MEDICAL INSPECTOR

**1. PURPOSE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive specifies the VHA policy for cooperation with the Office of the Medical Inspector (OMI).

**2. BACKGROUND:** The OMI serves as an objective and independent arm of the Office of the Under Secretary for Health. It is responsible for monitoring of the quality of medical care provided by VHA, and independent review of those VHA offices that manage quality and performance activities.

a. The OMI may initiate investigations, or undertake them, on behalf of the Under Secretary for Health, when requested to do so by veterans, VHA employees, the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Inspector General, members of Congress, or other stakeholders. The Medical Inspector is a member of the VHA senior management team and carries out the office's mandate through collaborative, collegial interactions with VHA facility and network managers. The OMI may resolve an issue through any of several methods, including inquiry to the parties concerned or through the use of existing data. When appropriate, the OMI may require additional information or conduct site visits to collect information in order to develop the factual analysis needed to resolve an issue.

b. OMI reviews may involve individual case reviews, program reviews, peer reviews, or reviews of systemic issues such as root cause analyses (RCAs) or other issues determined by the Medical Inspector to be within the scope of the OMI. *NOTE: This includes care provided to veterans by VA facilities or through contractual arrangements.*

**3. POLICY:** It is VHA policy that all VHA officials, employees, and contractors must cooperate fully and forthrightly with the OMI. Requests for information or follow-up by the OMI are to be viewed as requests by the Under Secretary for Health. *NOTE: Should the effort required to respond promptly to an OMI request impinge on a unit's ability to do its work in a timely manner, the office may, upon request, adjust the deadline for a reply.*

**4. ACTION:** The OMI is responsible for coordinating and collaborating with the parties involved in an investigation and for presenting the findings of an inquiry to the Under Secretary for Health.

**THIS VHA DIRECTIVE EXPIRES JUNE 30, 2011**

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a. Requests for information from the OMI (whether oral or in writing), must be promptly and completely answered. OMI, as a component of VHA, has legal authority under applicable Federal privacy laws and regulations to access and use any information, including health information, maintained in VHA records for the purposes of health care operations and health care oversight. The OMI's requests for information must be honored.

b. If any problems in responding can be anticipated, the OMI must be contacted immediately to review any issues and to determine how those issues are to be handled. OMI's decision in this regard is final.

c. When indicated by the information received or through other circumstances, the OMI may establish a team to investigate an issue. VA facilities are expected to provide maximum support and assistance to OMI teams in the course of an investigation. ***NOTE:** Should issues arise that might lead to questions or difficulties regarding provision of information to or support for the OMI, responsible officials should call the Medical Inspector directly.*

**5. REFERENCES:** None.

**6. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITY:** The Office of the Medical Inspector (10MI) is responsible for the contents of this VHA Directive. Questions may be addressed to 202-501-2000.

**7. RESCISSION:** VHA Directive 2001-038 is rescinded. This VHA Directive expires June 30, 2011.

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