

May 28, 2003

DISABLING THE MEANS TEST AND/OR APPOINTMENT BLOCKING FUNCTIONALITY

1. PURPOSE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive outlines interim VHA policy and required action for removing and/or disabling incomplete means test appointment and workload transmission blocking functionality in the Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture (VistA).

2. BACKGROUND

a. VHA's implementation of financial assessments to determine health care eligibility (Means Tests) has been plagued by inconsistent policy application, procedural difficulties, and criticism by review bodies such as the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). Past policies to force compliance with financial assessment requirements, principally linking presence of a current financial assessment to workload reporting and to appointment scheduling, have created significant burdens for veterans and VHA administrative support staff.

b. VHA has reassessed its strategy for meeting legislative and regulatory health benefits financial assessment requirements. Policy changes have been approved that dramatically reduce the recurring financial reporting burden for veterans and VHA administrative support staff. However, full implementation of this revised policy requires substantial changes to the financial assessment renewal process and the information systems supporting health care eligibility determinations. *NOTE: It is anticipated that procedural and information system changes will require a substantial lead-time before they can be implemented.*

c. As an initial step in implementation of the new financial assessment process, the policies requiring blocking workload reporting and appointment scheduling are being rescinded.

d. A series of four patches will be released concurrently, as one Kernel Installation and Distribution System (KIDS) build, to address removal of appointment and transmission blocking when a current financial assessment is not present. This software modifies the initial, reminder and final means test renewal request letters that were included as attachments to VHA Directive 2002- 019. *NOTE: Updated letters may be found in Attachments A, B, and C.*

3. POLICY: It is VHA policy that workload may be transmitted to the National Patient Care Database (NPCD) for veterans lacking a current financial assessment. Additionally, appointment scheduling will not be blocked for veterans who do not have a current financial assessment on file.

4. ACTION

a. **Medical Center Directors.** Medical center Directors are responsible for ensuring that:

THIS VHA DIRECTIVE EXPIRES MAY 31, 2007

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(1) VistA patches included with SD*5.3*296 are installed within 30 days of release. Patches included in the KIDS build are: SD*5.3*296, DG*5.3*512, PX*1*122 and EAS*1*32.

(2) Inpatient PTF records that have not been transmitted due to lack of a means test are identified. Sites need to manually close, release and transmit these records to NPCD as soon as possible.

(3) Encounters and admissions for veterans who lack a current means test are identified with a "U" value. **NOTE:** *VistA reports focusing on transmitted workload with a "U" value will be provided in the near future. In the interim, sites are to be provided with information on how to use existing VistA reporting tools.*

(4) VistA and National (KLF and ARC) reports are monitored to assist in tracking these encounters and completing required means tests.

(5) The facility continues to obtain a current financial assessment for veterans who are receiving VA health care. Although workload for veterans who lack a current financial assessment may be transmitted to the NPCD, this workload may not be counted toward Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation (VERA)-based funding. Facilities need to continue to mail letters to veterans requesting renewal of their financial assessment information prior to expiration of their current test.

b. Outpatient workload for Fiscal Year 2003 that has only been rejected due to lack of a means test, will be automatically transmitted to NPCD the next time the Amb Care Nightly Background job is executed (after the patches are installed). **NOTE:** *Further details are included in the patch description for SD*5.3*296.*

5. REFERENCES: None.

6. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITY: The Chief Business Officer (16) is responsible for the content of this Directive. Questions may be addressed to 202-254-0319.

7. RESCISSIONS: VHA Directive 2002-019 is rescinded. This VHA Directive expires May 31, 2008.

S/ Louise Van Diepen for
Robert H. Roswell, M.D.
Under Secretary for Health

Attachments

DISTRIBUTION: CO: E-mailed 5/29/03
FLD: VISN, MA, DO, OC, OCRO, and 200 – E-mailed 5/29/03

ATTACHMENT A

**SAMPLE OF FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO BE SENT 60 DAYS PRIOR TO THE
ANNIVERSARY OF THE VETERAN'S MEANS TEST**

(Date)

VA Medical Center
123 Albany St
Albany, NY 12000

RE: Means Test Anniversary Date

Dear Mr. TEST:

Each year the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) requires non-service connected veterans and 0% service connected veterans to complete a financial assessment (the Means Test). Our records show that your annual means test is due.

What Does This Mean To You?

1. The means test you completed last year exempted you from co-payments for health care provided for your non-service connected conditions.
2. Failure to complete the means test by the anniversary date will cause your priority for enrollment in the VA health care system to lapse.

What Do You Need To Do?

1. Complete and sign the Financial Assessment portion of the enclosed VA Form 10-10EZ, Application for Health Benefits, reporting income and assets for the previous calendar year.
2. Return the completed and signed form in the enclosed envelope before your means test anniversary date.
3. When you report to your next health care appointment, bring your health insurance card so we may update your health insurance information.
4. Notify us if you feel you received this letter in error.

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Do You Have Questions? If you have any questions or need assistance in the completion of the information requested, contact your local VA Medical Center Business Office between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Thank you for your assistance and cooperation.

Sincerely,

(Chief HAS or equivalent official)

Enclosure

ATTACHMENT B

**SAMPLE OF FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO BE SENT 30 DAYS PRIOR TO THE END OF
60-DAY PERIOD**

(Date)

VA Medical Center
123 Albany St
Albany, NY 12000

RE: Means Test Anniversary Date

Dear Mr. TEST:

Each year the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) requires non-service connected veterans and 0% service connected veterans to complete a financial assessment (the Means Test). Our records show that your annual means test is due.

As of this date we have not received the updated financial income information we requested in a previous letter.

What Does This Mean To You?

1. The means test you completed last year exempted you from co-payments for health care provided for your non-service connected conditions.
2. Failure to complete the means test by the anniversary date will cause your priority for enrollment in the VA health care system to lapse.

What Do You Need To Do?

1. Complete and sign the enclosed Financial Assessment portion of the enclosed VA Form 10-10EZ, Application for Health Benefits, reporting income and assets for the previous calendar year.
2. Return the completed and signed form in the enclosed envelope before your means test anniversary date.
3. When you report to your next health care appointment, bring your health insurance card so we may update your health insurance information.
4. Notify us if you feel you received this letter in error.

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Do You Have Questions? If you have any questions or need assistance in the completion of the information requested, contact your local VA Medical Center Business Office between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Thank you for your assistance and cooperation.

Sincerely,

(Chief HAS or equivalent official)

Enclosure

ATTACHMENT C

**SAMPLE OF LETTER TO BE SENT AS A REMINDER TO VETERAN AT THE END
OF 60-DAY PERIOD**

(Date)

VA Medical Center
123 Albany St
Albany, NY 12000

RE: Means Test Anniversary Date

Dear Mr. TEST:

According to our records you have not responded to our previous requests to complete the financial section of Department of veterans Affairs (VA) Form 10-10EZ, Application for Health Benefits. This is to inform you that your current financial assessment (the Means Test) has expired.

How Does This Affect Your Eligibility for Cost-Free Care? We do not have a current means test for you on file as is required to determine your eligibility for cost-free care.

How Does This Affect Your Enrollment? We are unable to determine your priority for enrollment in the VA health care system.

What Do You Need To Do?

1. Complete, sign and return a new VA Form 10-10EZ, including the financial section.
2. Read the enclosed VA Form 4107VHA, Your Rights to Appeal our Decision. If you disagree with our decision, you or your representative may complete a Notice of Disagreement and return it to the Enrollment Coordinator or Health Benefits Advisor at your local VA health care facility.

Do You Have Questions? If you have any questions or need assistance in the completion of the information requested, contact your local VA Medical Center Business Office between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Sincerely,

(Chief HAS or equivalent official)

Enclosure