

VETERAN HEALTH IDENTIFICATION CARD

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive outlines Department wide policy and procedures for creation, distribution and purpose of the Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC).
- 2. SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES:** This VHA Directive updates current procedures.
- 3. RELATED ISSUES:** None.
- 4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Chief Business Office is responsible for the contents of this VHA Directive. Questions may be addressed to (202) 382-2500.
- 5. RESCISSIONS:** VHA Directive 1610.01, dated October 20, 2009 is rescinded.
- 6. RECERTIFICATION:** This VHA Directive is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of October 2020.

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VETERAN HEALTH IDENTIFICATION CARD

1. PURPOSE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive outlines policy and procedures for the creation and distribution of the new Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC). **AUTHORITY:** 38 U.S.C. 7301(b).

2. BACKGROUND: In 2004, VHA started using a Veteran Identification Card (VIC) production system in which VA medical facilities captured the Veteran's identifying information through Veterans Information Systems and Technology Architecture (VistA). The VIC contains the Veteran's Social Security number (SSN) in the card's barcode and magnetic stripe. Due to SSN reduction mandates throughout the Federal government (see Office of Management and Budget Memorandum 07-16), VA began an initiative in 2010 to eliminate the SSN from the VIC. With the system changes in place, in February 2014, VA implemented a new Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC). In addition to being more secure, the card offers enhanced features transforming it into a Health Identification Card. Similar to a typical health insurance card, the VHIC displays the Veteran's Member ID and Plan ID. The Member ID is a unique number assigned by the Department of Defense and is also known as the Electronic Data Interchange Personal Identifier (EDIPI). The Plan ID reflects the Veteran's enrollment in VA health care. These new identifiers are leveraged to look up the Veteran's record in VHA information systems. A VHIC contains Personally Identifiable Information covered under the Privacy Act, since a Veteran's full name, full-face image (see Appendix A), and Member ID are used to retrieve information pertaining to him/her that is contained in VHA's system of records.

a. VHIC features:

- (1) Color photograph of the Veteran.
- (2) Bar code and magnetic stripe with the SSN removed; micro text to prevent counterfeiting.
- (3) Personalized displays, emblem of Veteran's branch of service, and indicator of disability from Service-connected condition, former POW status, recipient of Purple Heart or Medal of Honor.
- (4) Accessible braille, "VA" helps visually impaired Veterans to recognize and use the card.
- (5) A 10 year expiration date from time of initial issue and, meets national standard for health identification cards.
- (6) Informative displays, VA phone numbers, and emergency care instructions.

b. The VHIC system ensures that cards are only issued to Veterans enrolled with VHA to receive health care benefits. With the VHIC system, the Veteran's image is obtained for identification purposes using a webcam and software at the local VA medical facility. In cases where a Veteran is bedridden, or in a nursing home, a VA employee (usually a social worker) can take a photo and bring it back to the VA facility

for processing. Third-party photos supplied by non-VA employees will not be accepted. The Veteran's information and image are then electronically transmitted to a contract vendor who produces and mails the VHIC to the Veteran's designated mailing address, or to the facility requesting the card if the Veteran does not have a valid mailing address.

3. POLICY: It is VHA's policy, in accordance with VHA Handbook 1601A.03, Enrollment Determinations, that all enrolled Veterans be offered the opportunity to obtain a VHIC.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES:

a. **VA Medical Facility Directors.** VA medical facility Directors are responsible for ensuring that:

(1) Veterans enrolled at their facility are offered the opportunity to receive a VHIC and informed of the identity proofing requirements. While Veterans are encouraged to receive a VHIC, it will not be a requirement to receive VA health care services. **NOTE:** *Please refer to VHA Directive 2012-036 "Identity Authentication for Health Care Services," for types of information that are acceptable to verify a Veteran's identity.*

(2) Local policy and procedures are established to ensure all card requests are monitored through the VHIC database.

(3) Eligibility verification and enrollment processes and identity proofing of Veterans are conducted in accordance with Department-wide policy (see VHA Directive 2012-036, Identity Authentication for Health Care Services; VHA Handbook 1173.1, Eligibility; VHA Handbook 1601A.03, Enrollment Determinations).

(4) Locations where VHICs may be requested are convenient for the Veteran and sufficiently staffed with properly trained VA personnel to meet the need.

(5) Local standard operating procedures are developed to process and ensure security and accountability of VHICs that have been returned to the requesting facility as 'undeliverable' by the U.S. Postal Service.

(6) There are mechanisms in place to notify the Veteran that his or her card could not be delivered to his or her address and to issue it by:

(a) Obtaining the Veteran's current address, updating the address in the Enrollment System, and mailing the returned VHIC to the Veteran, or

(b) Issuing the card directly to the Veteran, the Veteran's personal representative, the person authorized as the Veteran's VA caregiver under 38 CFR Part 71, or the Veteran's general or health care power of attorney.

(7) If attempts to issue the VHIC to the Veteran are unsuccessful, the card must be destroyed in compliance with VHA Handbook 1907.01, Health Information Management and Health Records, Records Control Schedule 10-1, General Administrative Records,

Item 1, General Records Schedule 4.2 and 36 CFR 1228.184 after 90 days. Cards should be disposed of by cutting it up into multiple pieces or shredding.

(8) The VHIC's photo background color will be light blue for clarity. No other background (U.S. flag, state flag, etc.) is permitted. Veterans are instructed to remove items such as hats and sunglasses to facilitate an unobstructed facial photo. Photos will not be taken if the Veteran refuses to remove items that may result in an obstructed facial photo.

(9) VHIC personnel advise Veterans that upon receipt of their new VHIC to properly dispose of their old VIC by cutting it up into multiple pieces or shredding it.

(10) VHIC personnel advise Veterans that if a card is lost or stolen, a report will be filed with VHIC personnel and a new card will be issued to the Veteran.

b. **Health Eligibility Center.** The Health Eligibility Center (HEC) has overall responsibility for managing the VHIC program. To that end, HEC is responsible for ensuring that:

(1) Card requests are produced and mailed to Veterans in accordance with requirements of VA's contract with the card vendor.

(2) Lost cards returned to HEC will be destroyed in compliance with VHA Handbook 1907.01, Health Information Management and Health Records, VA Records Control Schedule 10-1, General Administrative Records, Item 1, General Records Schedule 4.2 and 36 CFR 1228.184 after 90 days. Cards should be disposed of by cutting it up into multiple pieces or shredding.

(3) Training, guidance, and communication materials concerning the VHIC program to the field are provided.

(4) Other VHA customers' requests for access to VHIC are appropriately processed.

5. REFERENCES:

a. VHA Directive 2012-036, Identity Authentication for Health Care Services.

b. VHA Handbook 1601A.03, Enrollment Determinations.

c. VHA Handbook 1173.1, Eligibility.

d. VHA Handbook 1907.01, Health Information Management and Health Records.

e. VA Records Control Schedule 10-1, General Administrative Records.

Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC) Example

