



Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs *Good News*



Volume 2 Issue 2

Welcome to Good News. This Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) newsletter highlights the accomplishments and sharing activities at both the local and national levels.

VA/DoD Joint Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2009 – 2011 Signed

On January 8, 2008, the co-chairs of the Joint Executive Council (JEC) signed the Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) for Fiscal Years (FY) 2009-2011. The JEC is co-chaired by the Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

The JSP describes and provides details on collaborative VA/DoD efforts and future plans in the areas of financial management, joint facility utilization, pharmacy, medical-surgical supplies procurement, patient safety, deployment health, mental health, clinical guidelines, contingency planning, case management, information management/information technology, and benefits delivery that strengthened the capability of both Departments to better serve our beneficiaries. The recommendations made by the *Task Force Report to the President: Returning Global War on Terror Heroes*, *The President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors*, *the Disability Benefits Commission*, and other advisory committees and review groups, have been reviewed and, where relevant, incorporated into the JSP. Additionally, emerging issues regarding Wounded Warriors have been incorporated into the current revision of the JSP. For more information on the Joint Strategic Plan, see the DoD/VA Program Coordination Office website at <http://www.tricare.mil/DVPCO/default.cfm>.

VA/DoD JEC FY2008 Annual Report Completed

The JEC, having completed its sixth year, has submitted their Annual Report for signature for the period of October 1, 2007 to September 30, 2008. Once signed, this report will be submitted to Congress and the Secretaries of Defense and Veterans Affairs as required by Public Law 97-174 and Public Law 108-136, codified at 38 United States Code, Sections 320 and 8111(f). In FY 2008, VA and DoD continued to focus on improving the effectiveness and efficiency of health care services and benefits to veterans, Service members, military retirees, and eligible dependents. This report describes and provides details on collaborative efforts and VA/DoD successes in the areas of financial management, joint facility utilization, pharmacy, medical-surgical supplies procurement, patient safety, deployment health, mental health, clinical guidelines, contingency planning, clinical case management, and benefits delivery that strengthened the capability of both Departments to better serve our beneficiaries. The report also discusses the progress made over the past year in the vital area of information sharing, both health and demographic data, and highlights the ongoing activities under the auspices of

the Joint Incentive Fund (JIF) and demonstration projects authorized in the FY 2003 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Finally, the report concludes with a synopsis of VA and DoD joint training and education initiatives and activities to promote collaboration and greater sharing of resources. The aforementioned JSP for FY09-11 will be appended to the Annual Report.

VHA/DoD Shared Training Partnership: Successful Deployment of 19 Compensation and Pension courses from VHA to DoD.

The last issue of this newsletter detailed the progress of the Pharmacy Training program by the Continuing Education and Training Work Group under the Health Executive Council. Another initiative undertaken by the Work Group in FY 2008 is the successful development of the Compensation and Pension courses. An issue of some concern to Congress as a result of the report of *The President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors*, headed by former Senator Bob Dole and former Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala, was the amount of time it was taking to conduct Compensation and Pension examinations for returning Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) veterans. As a result of these concerns the leadership of DoD and Veterans Health Administration (VHA) developed a strategy to expedite these exams. This strategy was in part reliant on the deployment of Compensation and Pension Training for DoD examiners. The Employee Education System in VHA had developed 19 training courses in this area to meet VHA training needs. The office of the VHA Undersecretary for Health approached the Work Group to request that these courses be reconfigured to run on the DoD Tri-Service Learning Management Systems (LMS) and be deployed as expeditiously as possible so as to be available to train DoD clinicians as part of the accelerated exam strategy. Because the Work Group had previously assessed the distributed learning architecture in VHA and DoD and had conducted demonstration projects on the transfer of web based training between the VHA and DoD LMSs, the methods, procedures and architectural elements necessary to transfer this training and activate it in DoD was well known. In addition, the Work Group had forged excellent communications and collaborative relations between the training staff in VHA and DoD. Thus, the Work Group was able to successfully transfer and deploy 19 Compensation and Pension training courses on the DoD MHS Learn LMS two weeks ahead of the target deadline. This collaborative effort is expected to result in faster and more accurate Compensation and Pension assessments of returning OEF and OIF military personnel, as well as accelerate access to earned benefits and quality care to our nation's returning veterans.

2008 Compensation and Benefits Handbook for Seriously Ill and Injured Service Members now available

In the FY 2008 NDAA, Section 1651, Congress mandated creation of a comprehensive book and its electronic version to describe the compensation and benefits available to seriously ill or injured members of the Armed Forces and their families. The Wounded warrior Personnel, Pay & Finance Work Group, in close collaboration with DoD, VA, Department of Labor, Social Security Administration, Health and Human Services, Department of Education, and Defense Finance and Accounting Service, did an outstanding job in developing and publishing *The Compensation and Benefits Handbook for Seriously Ill and Injured Service Members*. The handbook, which is available both in print and online, compiles into one source a wealth of

relevant information regarding VA and DoD benefits, compensation, rehabilitation, and tips for transferring to the civilian workforce. The handbook is a valuable tool and a part of the collective, on-going effort to provide improved care and support to all of our ill and injured Service members and their families. The first update is in progress and will also include conversion of the websites to Section 508 (Rehabilitation Act of 1973) compliance. Additionally, the handbook won a Gold Award in the 2008 Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals (MarCom) Awards competition out of over 5,000 entries from throughout the U.S. and several foreign countries. A copy of the handbook can be found at http://www.transitionassistanceprogram.com/portal/transition/resources/PDF/Compensation_and_Benefits_Handbook.pdf

For questions please contact the appropriate point of contact below.

Mr. Curtis Kimble

Army Medical Department DoD/VA
Healthcare Resources Sharing Program
703.681.2708
Curtis.Kimble1@us.army.mil

Ms. Betty Ruschmeier

Director, VA/DoD Liaison and Sharing Office
Veterans Health Administration
202-461-6534
Elizabeth.Ruschmeier@va.gov

Ms. Tamara L. Rollins

DoD/VA Program Manager
Bureau of Medicine and Surgery
202-762-3520
Tamara.Rollins@med.navy.mil

Ms. Maura Brady

Communications, DoD/VA Program
Coordination Office
TRICARE Management Activity/Health Affairs
Department of Defense
703-681-4258
maura.brady.ctr@tma.osd.mil

Ms. Debra Irwin, DAFC

Chief, DoD/VA Resource Sharing
Deputy Director, Medical Support Panel
AFMSA/SG3S
703-558-6658
debra.irwin@pentagon.af.mil

If you have any good news stories and or accomplishments from your local teams, please send them to Maura Brady at maura.brady.ctr@tma.osd.mil and your stories may be included in a future issue of the newsletter.

To be added to the distribution list, please email dvpc@tma.osd.mil.