

Department of
Veterans Affairs

Memorandum

Date: June 24, 2020

From: Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Benefits (201)

Subj: Evidence Based Policymaking

To: VBA Office Directors

1. Taking a rigorous approach to the way we deliver benefits and services to Veterans and their beneficiaries is one of the most vital ways in which we can honor their service. It also ensures taxpayers get value out of the dollars they commit to our programs.
2. As you may know, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requires¹ that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) conduct capacity assessments to determine the understanding and use of evidence in policy making at VA. Office of Strategic Initiatives and Collaboration (OSIC) recently completed the initial VBA assessment and used the results to develop an action plan to increase VBA's understanding and use of evidence in policy making.
3. I recognize we have always used evidence in our policy making, decisions, and legislative proposals and I want to stress the importance of continuing to do so. However, the assessment revealed that we need to focus on building a common understanding of what is meant by evidence. It also showed that we need to further develop our data, processes, and evaluation capacity to assess the impact our programs deliver to our Veterans.
4. Evidence needs to clearly articulate, with data and analysis, why we think a program will be effective, and allow us to evaluate its impact over time. It is not enough to justify our programs based on a need without supporting evidence. I have tasked OSIC with managing and overseeing VBA's Evidenced-Based portfolio, and they will be reaching out to you to participate in the improvement plan. Achieving better outcomes for Veterans and their beneficiaries is a goal we all share and increased emphasis on evidence will help us get there.

Thank you for your focus and your efforts on this important topic.



Margarita Devlin

¹ Reference: OMB Circular A-11, Section 290, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/s290.pdf>, which implements the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act

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