Database & Methods Cyberseminar Series

Session 2: Requesting Approval for Access to VA Data

November 6, 2017
Linda Kok, MA
VA Information Resource Center
Poll #1: Your role as a data user

What is your role in research and/or quality improvement?

- Investigator, PI, Co-I
- Data manager, analyst, or programmer
- Project coordinator
- Other – please describe via the Q&A function
Poll #2: Your experience with VA data

How many years of experience do you have working with VA data?

- One year or less
- More than 1, less than 3 years
- At least 3, less than 7 years
- At least 7, less than 10 years
- 10 years or more
Today’s objective

The purpose of this cyberseminar is to provide an introduction to requesting approval for access to VA data
Road map to research data access

1. Project Question & Aims
2. What data to use?
3. Get project data and access
4. Data Access Category
5. VHA specific?
6. Data access permissions
7. RA: Is research funded or non-funded?
8. Beg using data
9. What question to ask?
Session roadmap

2. Find data to match to question

5. VHA Data Access Category?

6. Data access permission process?

7. Receive data
2. Find data to match to question
Types of data: Examples

**Patient health records (EHR)**
- Allergy, Lab tests, Lab results, Echocardiogram, Immunization, Inpatient, Outpatient, Pharmacy, Radiology
- Mortality
- Diagnosis/treatment

**Patient care management**
- Appointments, Consults, Recall Reminders, Waitlists
- Community care outside the VA
- Primary care management

**Providers**
- Healthcare providers, specialties

**Locations of care**
- Facilities
- Size, complexity scores
Reminder on commonly used VA data sources

Utilization and Status

- CDW
- MedSAS & MedSAS Views
- VA Vital Status File

Clinical Care Activities & Costs

- VA MCA NDEs
- PBM
- VA CMS Data

Non-VA

VistA - EHR

Claims/Costs

11/2017
Additional VA data sources - examples

Special populations

- Prosthetics
- Spinal Cord Injury
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Oncology
- Geriatrics
- Mental Health
Welcome to the VHA Data Portal

The VHA Data Portal provides a comprehensive knowledge base of VA data sources and information from multiple sources for use in research and other purposes.

The one-stop-shop for VA data

Our home page design has been updated to provide you with everything you need. Each screen provides a list of available data resources by category.

New from VIREC

New CDW Factbooks

- LabChem 2.0 Domain
- Inpatient 3.0 Domain (Part I - Inpatient)
- Patient Associated 1.0 Domain

The Researcher's Notebook #9

This issue is devoted to clarifying the diverse content found in the records of the three main tables of CDW's Inpatient Domains: Outpatient.Visit, Outpatient.Workload and Outpatient.VisitLogic.

VIREC Resources

- Learn about VA data:
  - Data Sources
  - Data Topics
  - Data Tools
Session roadmap

5. VHA Access Category?

6. Data access permission process?

7. Receive data
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New Data User

Research

Operations & Quality Improvement

Upcoming Events

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- Nov 06: Requesting Approval for Access to VA Data (Kok, L)
- Nov 21: Examining Women Veterans' Experiences and Perceptions of the Veterans Choice Program (Mattocks, K)
- Dec 04: Measuring Veterans' Medicare Health Services Use (de Groot, K)

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Tell VIReC your data story!
Research Access

Overview

VHA Researchers can request access to VHA data sources and data access tools for a research protocol approved by a VA Research and Development (R&D) Committee and reviewed by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). VHA data, along with other types of health information, enable VHA investigators to conduct groundbreaking research that improves the delivery of health care to Veterans and the general public.

Note: The following resources provide information on determining whether a VHA operations activity constitutes research:

- Research vs Operations Decision Tool
- VHA Handbook 1058.05: VHA Operations Activities That May Constitute Research (Oct 2011)

Types of Data Access

Expand the options below to learn more about the types of VHA data access available for approved research projects.

- Direct Access
- Data Extracts

Requesting Access

Access to data sources and data access tools is available through several request processes, including:

- Patient Care Services (PCS) Request Process
- Pharmacy Benefits Management (PBM) Request Process
Data Source Request Processes

Expand a data source in the list below to view an outline of its data request process.

+ Expand All

+ ADUSH Enrollment Files
+ AITC Mainframe
+ BIRLS Death File
+ CDW Data
+ HERC Cost Data
+ Homeless Registry
+ MCA (formerly DSS) NDEs
+ MCA (formerly DSS) Web Reports
+ Medical SAS Inpatient & Outpatient Data Sets
+ Non-VA Medical Care (formerly Fee Basis) Files
+ NPPD
+ OEF/OIF/OND Roster
+ Pi2
+ PBM Database
+ PSSG Geocoded Enrollee Files
+ VA/CMS Data for Research
+ VETSNET File
+ Vital Status File
### Data Source Request Processes

Expand a data source in the list below to view an outline of its data request process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Level of Access</th>
<th>Identifier</th>
<th>Data Format</th>
<th>Type of Access</th>
<th>Request Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CDW Data</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>Real, scrambled SSN or no SSN</td>
<td>SQL</td>
<td>Extract</td>
<td>DART Request Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIRLS Death File</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>Combined Real and Scrambled SSN</td>
<td>SQL</td>
<td>Extract</td>
<td>DART Request Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCA (formerly DSS) NDES</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>Real or Scrambled SSN or Patient SID</td>
<td>SQL</td>
<td>Extract</td>
<td>DART Request Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCA (formerly DSS) NDES</td>
<td>National, VISN, Local</td>
<td>Real or Scrambled SSN</td>
<td>SAS</td>
<td>Extract</td>
<td>DART Request Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical SAS</td>
<td>National, VISN, Local</td>
<td>Real SSN or Scrambled SSN</td>
<td>SQL*</td>
<td>Extract</td>
<td>DART Request Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>National, VISN, Local</td>
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<td>National</td>
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<td>SQL</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vital Status File</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>Real SSN Crosswalk</td>
<td>SQL</td>
<td>Extract</td>
<td>DART Request Process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Copies of Mainframe SAS Data Sets in SQL Format.
* Although DSS is now known as MCA, the SQL tables for the MCA NDES within CDW are under a DSS Schema and still use the DSS name (Example: Dss.ALBCO).
* MCA NDE legacy SAS Data Sets.

The Corporate Data Warehouse (CDW) page provides more information about this data source.

### Tools Request Processes

Expand a data access tool in the list below to view an outline of its access request process.

- AITC Mainframe Workspace
Operations & Quality Improvement Access

Overview

VA or VHA employees or contractors who require broader access to data in the performance of their official duties under the treatment, payment, and/or healthcare operations provisions of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) can request access to the data required to perform their jobs. This includes quality assessment and improvement, operational reporting, auditing and general administrative duties.

Note: The following resources provide information on determining whether a VHA operations activity constitutes research.

- Research vs Operations Decision Tool
- VHA Handbook 1058.05: VHA Operations Activities That May Constitute Research (Oct 2011)
- Operations Data Access Policy

Requesting Access

Access to data sources and data access tools is available through several request processes.

- Patient Care Services (PCS) Request Process
- Pharmacy Benefits Management (PBM) Request Process
- Local Customer User Provisioning System (CUPS) POC Request Process
- Medicare and Medicaid Analysis Center (MAC) Request Process
- VINCI Workspace Request Process

The following processes are managed by National Data Systems:

- CAPRI / VistAWeb Request Process
- Healthcare Operational Request Process

Determining which process to use for requesting access depends on the data source or data access tool:

- Expand a source or tool in the lists below for an outline of its access request process.
- View Terms and Definitions used in these outlines.

Note: Operational data users generally receive direct access to VHA data.

Data Source Request Processes

Expand a data source in the list below to view an outline of its data request process.
Example: CDW Operations Access

Data Source Request Processes

Expand a data source in the list below to view an outline of its data request processes.

- ADUSH Enrollment Files
- AITC Mainframe
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- CDW Data
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- NPPD
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- PI2
- PBM Database
- PSSG Geocoded Enrollee Files
- VAVCMS Data for Operations
- VETSNET File
- Vital Status File
- VSSC Web Reports

Tools Request Processes

Expand a data access tool in the list below to view an outline of its access to CDW Data.

- AITC Mainframe Workspace
What?
VHA data access requests: *It’s complicated!*  

**Complex Data Organization**  
- Data use purposes  
- Sources  
- Host/storage venues  
- Record identifiers  
- Stewards/ data access managers  
- Formats  
- Analysis platforms  

**Complex Access Request Processes**  
- Types of user privileges  
- Multiple request approval processes, forms and documents  
- Multiple access & delivery processes
What do you need to know?

- VHA data access category - data use
- Record identifier required
- Number of facilities included in project data
- Where data are hosted and stored
- Requirements and approval processes
- Platform/venue where you will manage and analyze data
- How you will receive/access your approved data
- Data formats
5. VHA Data Access Category?
How do I request data for research and operations purposes?

VHA maintains patient health information and other data used for a variety of purposes, such as program administration, healthcare quality improvement, program evaluation, and research. Select a category below for information about requesting data access or consult the Research vs Operations Decision Tool for additional guidance.

- **Operations Access**: VHA employees and contractors require access to data and information systems for healthcare quality assessments, operational reporting, auditing, planning, forecasting, and general administrative duties.

- **Research Access**: VHA researchers with VA approved research protocols require access to data and information systems to conduct research.

- **Preparatory to Research Access**: VHA researchers preparing research proposals require access to data and information systems to determine the feasibility of a proposed study and to demonstrate its significance.

How do I access data for medical advisory reviews?

VISNs and VHA practitioners require access to electronic health records to assist and cooperate with medical advisory reviews requested by VA Regional Counsels. Visit the Medical Advisory Opinions Access page for instructions.

How do I request data access for Veteran Service Organizations?

Authorized VSO representatives require read-only access to electronic health records to help Veterans prepare claims for VA benefits. Visit the VSO Access page for more information.
Access Category Finder

Data Use

- Program Administration
- Quality Improvement
- Program Evaluation
- Preparatory to Research

Definition

- Planning and administrative analysis for a VHA facility or program office
- Improving a process or activity within VHA
- Evaluating a process, activity, or program within VHA
- Preparing a research proposal or protocol intended to contribute to generalizable knowledge
- Conducting a VA approved research project that contributes to generalizable knowledge
- Conducting a project funded as research

Access Category

- Operations
- Preparatory to Research
- Research

6. Data access permission process?
What do you need to know?

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- How you will receive/access your approved data
- Data formats
## Record identifier required

### Identifiers
- VA’s scrambled SSN
- Real SSN
- ICN
- CMS Beneficiary ID

### Reasons driving choice/selection
- Data only available with one type
- Link to primary data collection
- Need to link to non-VA data
- Only CDW data being used

11/2017
Number/location of facilities included in project data

- Local – Your local VA healthcare facility/medical center
- VISN - Facilities only within your VISN
- National – Any facilities outside your VISN
Where VHA data are hosted and stored

CDW

AITC mainframe

VHA program offices

PBM

CAPRI & JLV

VINCI

MAC

VIReC

VSSC
What do you need to know?

✓ VHA data access category - data use
✓ Record identifier required
✓ Number of facilities included in project data
✓ Where data are hosted and stored
☐ Requirements and approval processes
☐ Platform/venue where you will manage and analyze data
☐ How you will receive/access your approved data
☐ Data formats
What do you need to know?

- VHA data access category - data use
- Record identifier required
- Number of facilities included in project data
- Where data are hosted and stored
- Requirements and approval processes
- Platform/venue where you will manage and analyze data
- How you will receive/access your approved data
- Data formats
Typical standard requirements specific to data access category
Standard Requirements: Operations

Online application

• Supervisor approval
• ISO approval
Standard Requirements: Research

Project documents and approvals

- Research Study Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval letter(s)
- Research and Development Committee approval letter(s)
- Research study protocol
- Where required by IRB or ORD
  - Sample Informed Consent or Waiver of Informed Consent
  - IRB Approved HIPAA Authorization or Waiver of HIPAA Authorization
  - Real SSN Access Request Form
Standard Requirements: Preparatory to Research Memo

Information

• The proposed topic/protocol name
• Data access timeframe
• Brief summary of the study objectives
• Explanation of the intended use of the data to prepare the proposal:

Affirmations

• Requesting access only to develop a research proposal/protocol
• Only aggregate data will be recorded and only used for background information;
  • Individually identifiable information will not be recorded (retained);
  • Data reviewed will not be used for contacting or recruiting subjects;
  • Data will not be reused for any other purpose
Requirements specific to data access manager
# Examples - Data access managers & sources

| NDS (DART) | • CDW  
|           | • MCA NDEs  
|           | • MedSAS Real SSN  |
| VIReC     | • Medicare  
|           | • Medicaid  |
| PBM       | • Pharmacy Rx Fills  |
| PCS       | • Prosthetics  
|           | • Spinal Cord Injury  
|           | • RAIMDS data  |
| CUPS POC  | • MedSAS – mainframe Scrambled SSN  
|           | • VSSC Scrambled SSN  |
Research: Ex. NDS DART forms on Data Portal – research

- Research Request Memo

```
Department of Veterans Affairs
Date: ________________________
From: Principal Investigator "Insert Name of Principal Investigator"
Subj: Research Data Request Memo for: "Tracking Number - Name of Protocol"
To: Director, National Data Systems

The following information is required and all signatures must be obtained before any review of this request can take place:

- Are all participants requesting access a VA employees or WOC employees? □ Yes □ No
- Is this request for data use for a VA research study (includes pilot studies)? □ Yes □ No
- Is this request for activities preparatory to research? □ Yes □ No
- Select the type(s) of data needed: □ Real SSN □ Scrambled SSN □ PHI but No SSN
- Is access to CAPRI / VistAWeb being requested? □ Yes □ No
- Is AITC Main Frame access being requested? □ Yes □ No
- Is access to VSSC and/or MCA Web Reports being requested? □ Yes □ No
- Will any requested data be transferred outside of the VA? □ Yes □ No
- Will the data be stored in the VINCI Environment? □ Yes □ No □ Both

Please describe the data you are requesting. The data requested must reflect data discussed in the protocol or HIPAA waiver if applicable and selected in DART.
```

http://vaww.v
Research: Ex. NDS DART data source forms

CDW DOMAIN CHECKLIST

Research Protocols typically request data from the CDW Patient Domain within the Patient Encounter System. A protocol has been approved by the Committee on Human Research and the IRB, and requires mandatory data elements such as:

- Department of Veterans Affairs
- VA E-Mail Address
- VA ID Number
- VA Social Security Number
- VA Date of Birth
- VA Site
- DART Tracking Number

RULES OF BEHAVIOR FOR ACCESS AND USE OF DATA FROM VHA VITAL STATUS FILES

The following rules of behavior apply to everyone, e.g., VHA employees, contractors, and business partners, with access to data from the VHA Vital Status File from National Data Systems.

The VHA Vital Status File (VSF) contains data from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that have been provided for use in the VHA. These CMS data contain sensitive information including the personal health information of Veterans and non-Veterans. CMS can revoke the privilege for use of all Medicare data within VA for any loss or misuse of this data and as such, have the potential to cause great risk to Veterans, employees, and the Agency.

Because of this risk, users must take a heightened responsibility for protection of the data and because written guidance cannot cover every contingency, personnel are asked to go beyond the stated rules, using their best judgment and highest ethical standards to guide their actions.

It is the responsibility of the user to ensure all contractual obligations are met and that the data is used as intended.
Operations: QI, PE data request: Ex. NDS ePAS

For additional guidance regarding Purpose of Use, please click on the following link:
http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/coveredentities/usesanddisclosuresforhipaahome.html

11/2017
Research: VIReC VA/CMS standard forms - email

PROJECT INFORMATION AND AUTHORIZATION

DATA SECURITY COMPLIANCE

VA/CMS Data from VIReC
Rules of Behavior

DATA DESCRIPTION
CMS/USRDS Data for Veterans Only
Operations: MAC VA/CMS process

- [http://vaww.va.gov/medicareanalysis/](http://vaww.va.gov/medicareanalysis/)

The VHA Medicare and Medicaid Analysis Center (MAC) is a field office of the Office of the Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health (ADUSH) for Policy and Planning. The VHA MAC, in collaboration with the VA Information Resource Center (VIReC) coordinates the ordering, processing and distribution of Medicare, Medicaid and United States Renal Data System (USRDS) data. The VHA MAC and VIReC are the primary clearinghouse for CMS and USRDS data within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). The VHA MAC distributes this data to approved operational program offices and VIReC distributes to approved research users.

In collaboration with VIReC, MAC implements policies and procedures for the use of CMS and USRDS data within VHA. Please refer to the following policy documents for detailed guidance: [VHA Handbook 1153.01, "Use of Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) AND United States Renal Data System (USRDS) Data In Veterans Health Administration (VHA)"](http://vaww.va.gov/medicareanalysis/) and [CMS Data directive VHA Directive 1153, "Access to Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) AND United States Renal Data System (USRDS) Data for Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Users Within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Information Technology (IT) Systems"](http://vaww.va.gov/medicareanalysis/). Links may need to be pasted into your web browser.
Research: PBM Data Request

Provides custom data extracts for research

Pharmacy Benefits Management
Strategic Health Care Group
Research Data Request

The following must be done to obtain PBM v.3 pharmacy data for research purposes:

1. Mail a copy of the IRB approval form and a summary of the study protocol to the following address:

   Attn: Cheryl Benson (119D)
   Pharmacy Benefits Management
   1st Ave. - 1 Block N. of Cermak Rd.
   Bldg 37 Rm 139
   Hines, IL 60141

2. Complete and submit the form that appears when you click the button below:

Submit
QI & PE & Research: Patient Care Services Process

- Requirements include:
  - Data Transfer Agreement (DTA)
  - Brief description of the study
  - List of variables and fields needed & justification
  - PCS Data Security Checklist

- Data request forms and data dictionaries are available on the PCS SharePoint site – different DTA forms for each category

http://vaww.infoshare.va.gov/sites/OSPM/default.aspx

- **Point of contact** for DUA requests: **Julie Strickland**

- **Questions:** VHA10P4PCSDR@VA.GOV
Where required:

- Scrambled SSN
- Mainframe MedSAS
- VSSC Web Reports
- ADUSH Enrollment - Mainframe
- Real SSN
- Local MedSAS on Mainframe
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Tell VIReC your data story!
Session roadmap

7. Receive data
What do you need to know?

- VHA data access category - data use
- Record identifier required
- Number of facilities included in project data
- Where data are hosted and stored
- Requirements and approval processes
- Platform/venue where you will manage and analyze data
- How you will receive/access your approved data
- Data formats
## Where will you manage and analyze data?

### Examples

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Operations</th>
<th>Prep to Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data on CDW - all</td>
<td>VINCI/Download</td>
<td>CDW Workspace/Download</td>
<td>VINCI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data on Mainframe</td>
<td>Mainframe/Download</td>
<td>Mainframe/Download</td>
<td>Mainframe/Download</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMS Data</td>
<td>VINCI/SAS Grid/Download</td>
<td>VINCI/Download</td>
<td>Contact VIReC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBM Data</td>
<td>Download</td>
<td>Download</td>
<td>Contact PBM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCS Data</td>
<td>Download</td>
<td>Download</td>
<td>Contact PCS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Download = Transfer to the server/center approved for your local facility
Receiving/accessing your approved data

Direct access to full datasets or domains
  Operations access to domains needed
  Access on AITC mainframe

Receive data views or extracts of study cohort data
  Defining and refining your cohort
  Selecting records that match your final cohort

VINCI Workspace

CDW transfer server – for you to pull into your local server
Standard data formats - Examples

NDS Managed Data
- CDW
  - SQL
- Mainframe
  - SAS

MAC/VIRec CMS Data
- SAS

PCS & PBM
- SAS
What do you need to know to get started?

- VHA data access category - data use
- Record identifier required
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Resources for your journey
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News

Tell VIReC your data story!
VA network only
News & new resources
Resources for working with data

Public-facing
VIReC overview
Publications & events
Cyberseminars

VA network only
Collaborative with NDS & VINCI
Data source & access information
## VIReC options for specific questions

<table>
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<th>HSRData Listserv</th>
<th>HelpDesk</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Community knowledge sharing</td>
<td>• Individualized support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ~1,200 VA data users</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Researchers, operations, data stewards, managers</td>
<td>(708) 202-2413</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Quick links for VA data resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>URL</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<td>VIReC:</td>
<td><a href="http://vaww.virec.research.va.gov/Index.htm">http://vaww.virec.research.va.gov/Index.htm</a></td>
<td>(VA Intranet)</td>
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<td>CDW:</td>
<td><a href="https://vaww.cdw.va.gov/Pages/CDWHome.aspx">https://vaww.cdw.va.gov/Pages/CDWHome.aspx</a></td>
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**Archived cyberseminar: What can the HSR&D Resource Centers do for you?**

Contact information

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Next session:
December 4, 2017

Database & Methods Cyberseminar Series

VA Medicare Data (VA/CMS)

Kristin de Groot, MPH
VA Information Resource Center
Acronyms and Abbreviations: Data Sources

- **CDW**: Corporate Data Warehouse
- **MedSAS**: VA Medical Files in Statistical Analysis Systems (SAS) format
- **VSF**: VA Vital Status File
- **PBM**: Pharmacy Benefits Management System Data
- **MCA NDEs**: Managerial Cost Accounting National Data Extracts (formerly DSS Decision Support Systems NDEs)
- **VA/CMS**: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Data for VA use
- **NPPD**: National Prosthetics Patient Database
- **PCS**: Patient Care Services Datasets
- **SCS**: Specialty Care Services Datasets
- **SDR**: Suicide Data Repository
- **HERC**: Health Economics Resource Center Cost Data and Web Reports
- **TIU Notes**: Ben: Text Integrated Units (Progress notes, etc.)
- **BIRLS**: Beneficiary Identification Records Locator Subsystem Death File
- **CAPRI**: Compensation & Pension Record Interchange Application (VHA Electronic Health Record)
- **JLV**: Joint Legacy Viewer – Electronic Health Records for VA and Department of Defense and Community Partners
- **CAN Scores**: Care Assessment Need Scores
- **SQDUG**: Surgery Quality Data User Group Data (CDW Surgery Domain data)
- **VSSC**: VHA Support Service Center Web Reports & Data Cubes
- **ADUSH**: Associate Deputy Under Secretary for Health Enrollment Files
- **PSSG**: Planning Systems Support Group Geocoded Enrollee Files
- **VETSNET**: Veterans Services Network Corporate Mini Master File

Acronyms and Abbreviations: Data Stewards & Access Managers

- **NDS**: National Data Systems
- **PBM**: Pharmacy Benefits Management Office
- **PCS**: Patient Care Services
- **SCS**: Specialty Care Services
- **MAC**: ADUSH OPP Medicare Analysis Center
- **VIReC**: VA Information Resource Center
- **CUPS POC**: Customer User Provisioning System Point of Contact (at each facility)