





DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
WASHINGTON, DC 20001



SUBJECT: Status Request—Goals Not Met for Implementation of the Beneficiary Travel Self-Service System
(Report Number 21-03598-92, Issued Date: May 31, 2023)

1. Thank you for providing status updates regarding the subject report on January 3 and 17, 2024. Based upon this information, **OIG closed the following recommendation: 3.**
2. **OIG considers the following recommendations of the subject report open at this time: 1, 2, and 4.** Please use the attached template to complete your response to each open recommendation. We request that you provide a narrative describing the progress made towards full implementation over the preceding 90 days. Provide supporting documentation (if applicable) in the form of embedded documents. Indicate whether you recommend closing any recommendations.

| Goals Not Met for Implementation of the Beneficiary Travel Self-Service System Report Number 21-03598-92, Issued May 31, 2023 | |
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| Recommendation 1: | The director of the Veterans Transportation Program determines what system changes are needed to meet auto-adjudication goals and implement these changes. |
| OIG Comment: | Please ensure your response contains documentation to verify the completion of the stated actions below. |
| VA Response: | <p>VHA Initial Comments: Concur.</p> <p>The Veterans Transportation Program (VTP), in collaboration with VA Office of Information and Technology (OIT), will perform a complete assessment of defined performance measures for the Beneficiary Travel Self-Service System (BTSSS), ensure the defined performance measures and associated management reports are readily available to VHA leadership, establish a process to regularly monitor, analyze deviations from established performance measures and take action to address performance of VA medical centers not meeting the standard.</p> <p>Additionally, VHA and OIT will perform a full analysis of BTSSS rules engine, identify opportunities to consolidate redundant rules and/or eliminate excessive rules and implement appropriate changes to the rules engine that impair VHA's ability to balance goals of timely delivery of benefits with the goal of mitigating risk of improper payments.</p> <p>Status: In progress Target Completion Date: March 2024</p> <p>VHA Status Update September 2023 VTP continues to collaborate with OIT to improve the efficiency of BTSSS. Recent BTSSS updated/revised rules deployed include: 3.5.0 deployed 6/29/23 (BTSSS-4938, BTSSS-5520, BTSSS-5698, BTSSS-5505); 3.6.0 deployed 8/10/23 (BTSSS-6176); 3.7.0 deploys 9/21/23 (BTSSS-6321).</p> <p>Status: In Progress Target Completion Date: March 2024</p> <p>VHA Status Update December 2023 VTP continues to collaborate with OIT to prioritize change requests and execute changes in line with the available budget and constraints to improve the efficiency of BTSSS. Most recently, BTSSS 3.8.0 was deployed on 11/2/2023, with Change Request 3934 improvements related to Transplant/Donor enhancements. BTSSS Auto-Adjudication rate increased from 26.5% at the end of FY22 to 28.7% at the end of FY23.</p> <p>Status: In Progress Target Completion Date: March 2024</p> |

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| | <p>VHA Status Update March 2024</p> <p>VTP met with OIT and VEO in Atlanta during the week of February 26, 2024, to further strategize BTSSS improvements for prioritizing staff experience, veteran experience, and reporting capabilities of the system (please see BT-OIT Update embedded below). Additionally, the team performed a full analysis of all 62 rules in the BTSSS rules engine and determined auto-adjudication performance metrics. An agreement was reached on prioritizing the elimination of rules that are negatively impacting auto-adjudication rates but do not increase the risk of improper payments as captured within JIRA Updates supporting documentation. The team established a cyclical process for continued monitoring of the execution of BTSSS enhancements and change request prioritizations.</p> <p>Status: Complete</p> |
| Supporting Documentation: | <div>   </div> <p>JIRA Updates.pdf BT-OIT Update.pdf</p> |
| Status: | We request closure of this recommendation based on the evidence provided above. |
| Recommendation 2: | The director of the Veterans Transportation Program conducts outreach to users, solicits feedback, and considers whether system changes are needed based on feedback, to increase self-service portal usage. |
| OIG Comment: | Please ensure your response contains documentation to verify the completion of the stated actions below. |
| VA Response: | <p>VHA Initial Comments:</p> <p>Concur.</p> <p>The Veterans Transportation Program (VTP) will collaborate with stakeholders from the Veterans Integrated Service Networks and VA medical centers (VAMC) to refresh and expand the communications plan strategy provided to the VAMC public affairs teams prior to the BTSSS national deployment, to ensure community stakeholders (including Veterans, Veterans Service Offices, etc.) have awareness of BTSSS, as well as an understanding of the application and benefits of using the self-service option.</p> <p>Additionally, VTP, in collaboration with the VA OIT and the Veterans Experience Office, will expand the baseline BTSSS Veteran survey (piloted in October 2022) to obtain feedback</p> |

regarding their experience using the BTSSS. We will utilize the customer feedback to perform targeted user testing by Veterans to develop and prioritize future changes to BTSSS.

Status: In progress Target Completion Date: March 2024

VHA Status Update September 2023

VTP continues to participate in outreach events and site visits to provide onsite guidance, training, and support for BTSSS to Veterans and staff. Twelve site visits completed during FY23 and VTP participated in four outreach events during the fourth quarter of FY23 (July: the VFW National Convention, August: the American Legion National Convention; the Vietnam Veterans of America National Convention; and the Coordinating Council for Access to Mobility National Panel Discussion).

VTP provides training and education forums on a recurring, bi-weekly basis to field staff for BTSSS updates as well as an opportunity for questions from the field.

On August 31, 2023, OMB approved an updated survey to be provided to beneficiaries who have recently utilized BTSSS for the submission of their travel claim.




The target completion date for deployment of the survey is October 31, 2023.

Status: In Progress Target Completion Date: October 2023


VHA Status Update December 2023

The monthly BTSSS survey was launched on October 31, 2023. A survey dashboard was created to analyze data trends. Currently, the BTSSS survey is anonymous. However, a change request will be submitted soon to remove anonymity to allow for focus groups and more transparent improvements based on identified significant trends. Additional potential survey modifications are being considered based on results analysis (i.e., distinguishing between non-VA and VA care, free text entry points, and submission modality).

VTP continues to provide training and education forums regularly to facilities and VISN staff on BTSSS. These forums provide an opportunity for questions regarding BTSSS to be answered. A VTP BTSSS SharePoint site is available with BTSSS outreach materials for field staff to use when educating, training, and informing beneficiaries of the BTSSS Veteran Self-Service Portal processes. The Veteran Self-Service Portal is improved with links to make the claim creation and submission process interactive to ease the use of the portal.

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| | <p>Due to the survey modifications, the target completion date has been reset to March 2024.</p> <p>Status: In Progress Target Completion Date: March 2024</p> <p>VHA Status Update March 2024</p> <p>Since October 2023, approximately 9,500 BTSSS surveys have been completed. 80%+ of the surveys were completed by veterans age 50+, with 97% of respondents filing between 1-5 claims a month and 79% traveling 1-60 miles (one-way) for their VA appointments.</p> <p>Throughout that same period VTP has seen a steady increase in key customer experience domains as the program office has identified areas of opportunity, assessed, and made strides towards improvements. VTP has seen a 14% increase in ease/simplicity of use for BTSSS and a 13% increase in satisfaction with BTSSS from October 2023 - March 2024.</p> <p>Key areas of opportunity identified through the survey surrounding improvement of the claim submission process include feedback from Veterans indicating additional modalities were preferred for claims submission. Based on this feedback, in addition to the claimant utilizing a personal device to submit a claim directly into BTSSS, two additional modalities are available. With upgraded Kiosk-BTSSS integration, claimants may use this paperless modality to submit a claim. The mobile patient check-in application provides claimants the opportunity to submit a claim for mileage reimbursement during check-in for their VA appointment. From January 1, 2024, through March 25, 2024, over 205,000 claims have been submitted through these modalities.</p> <p>Status: Complete</p> |
| Supporting Documentation: | <div>  BTSSS Survey_Multiple Choic  BT-OIT Update.pdf  Kiosks and Veteran Experience Project C </div> |
| Status: | <p>We request closure of this recommendation based on the evidence provided above.</p> |

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| Recommendation 4: | The assistant under secretary for health for operations coordinates with the Veterans Health Administration Office of Finance and assess whether duplicate payments were made to veterans requesting travel reimbursement since the new system went live. |
| OIG Comment: | Please ensure your response contains documentation to verify the completion of the stated actions below. |
| VA Response: | <p>VHA Initial Comments: Concur. The Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Operations, with support from the Veterans Transportation Program, the Veterans Integrated Service Network, the VA medical centers, the Financial Services Center and the VHA Office of Finance, will assess the current payment system, internal controls, and whether duplicate payments occurred. Status: In progress Target Completion Date: March 2024</p> <p>VHA Status Update September 2023 The Veterans Transportation Program (VTP) continues coordination with appropriate VA Offices to assess whether internal controls are working and if duplicate payments occurred. Specifically, VTP is working with the Office of Information and Technology (OIT) and the VA Financial Services Center (FSC) to develop reports that analyze duplicate payment universe data within BTSSS and ensure VA's Financial Management System populates compatible data from BTSSS for future streamlined duplicate payment analysis. Additionally, recent payment integrity reviews over the Beneficiary Travel program did not identify duplicate payments as a significant cause of error for improper payments. Status: In Progress Target Completion Date: March 2024</p> <p>VHA Status Update December 2023 The Veterans Transportation Program (VTP) continues coordination with appropriate VA offices to assess duplicate payments and related controls. The Office of Information and Technology (OIT) is working to remedy BTSSS data conditioning, validation, and mapping issues to allow for streamlined duplicate payment analysis. Additionally, recent payment integrity reviews over the Beneficiary Travel program did not identify duplicate payments as a significant cause of error for improper payments. Status: In Progress Target Completion Date: March 2024</p> |

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| | VHA Status Update March 2024 The recommended assessment of duplicate payments are complete and are documented within the embedded supporting documentation below. Status: Complete |
| Supporting Documentation: |  BTSSS Rec 4 White Paper_OIG 21-03598- |
| Status: | We request closure of this recommendation based on the evidence provided above. |