

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Medical Advisory Opinions (MAOs)

1. **PURPOSE:** This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) establishes the process/procedure for processing Medical Advising Opinions (MAOs) for reviewer access to Vistaweb.

2. DEFINITIONS:

- ❖ **Medical Advisory Opinion (MAO):** MAOs originate when a Veteran files a claim against the VA for a medical issue.
- ❖ **VistAWeb:** VistAWeb is a web application used to review remote patient information found in VistA and Health Data Repository (HDR) databases.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES:

- ❖ **VA Attorney/Regional Counsel:**
 - A VA Attorney initiates requests for medical advisory opinions by providing the veteran's name, last four social security numbers, involved VISN and required specialty to the Office of Medical Legal Affairs.
 - The attorney or regional counsel must be available to the assigned facility to clarify questions pertaining to review.
- ❖ **Office of Medical Legal Affairs (OMLA):**
 - OMLA is responsible for receiving and coordinating assignment of Regional Counsels' request for medical advisory opinions.
 - The OMLA POC Camille Bratek sends an email out to the Chief of Staff (COS) of a selected VA Site, Regional Counsel and HIA MAO notifying involved parties of a review for a particular medical specialty.
- ❖ **Chief of Staff:**
 - Chief of Staff office assigns the case to the appropriate specialty reviewer and coordinates the exchange of personal identifiers and medical questions.
- ❖ **National Data Systems (NDS)/Health Information Access(HIA)**
 - NDS coordinates access to Vistaweb once reviewer has been selected by COS.
 - NDS/HIA also provides help desk support for reviewers once access has been granted.

4. PROCEDURES:

1. **Initial Request from Office of Medical/Legal Affairs:** Check email to ensure it includes the following
 - A. Case Number – (i.e. 13-1234) which represent the current fiscal year (13)
 - B. Veteran

- C. Involved VAMC Facility
- D. Requesting VA Attorney
- E. Regional Counsel Office
- F. Type of Review Requested
- G. Request Assigned to
- H. Chief of Staff

2. Creation of Alexsys ticket: With OMLA email open, an Alexsys ticket is created to capture the information in the email. The following fields are entered in the new MAO REQUEST Alexsys ticket

- A. Case number – 13xxx (do not leave space or put dash between)
- B. Veteran Last Name
- C. Veteran First Name and Middle Name
- D. Specialty. If the specialty is not on the drop down box enter it in the free text Description box.
- E. Initial Notice.
- F. Chief of Staff.
- G. Requesting Attorney.
- H. Physician Location.
- I. Access Location – There may be more than one site listed, list both. If there are three sites listed, put the third site in the free text Description box.
- J. Save the new ticket.

3. MAO Setup Process

A. Alexsys

- Go to the Alexsys search field.
- Enter the MAO case number and hit the find button.
- Determine which Alexsys ticket matches the specialty and/or site.
- After you have selected the appropriate Alexsys ticket the following fields must be completed:
 - Date Physician Assigned
 - Date Access Granted
 - Physician Assigned
 - Save.

B. VistAWeb setup

- a) Go the VistAWeb User Management application.

- b) Locate the site of assigned reviewer, grant access to ONE of the sites listed in the original OMLA email - if more than one is listed.
 - c) In the "REASON" field, click other, than type in MAO.
- C. In HIA Registry, the following fields must be completed
- a) Request Status = Approved
 - b) Alexsys ticket number. If there are more than three, remove the first one, and add the last one on at the end of the list.
 - c) Usergroup = Medical Advisory
 - d) Expiration date = sixty days from date of access
 - e) Name, to include middle initial if able to obtain from GAL or VistaWeb setup system.
 - f) Purpose for access = Operations
 - g) Level of Access = Site limited
 - h) Title = Either physician, nurse, or other ancillary staff.
 - i) Division = Site where reviewer is located. This will match the site you find them in the VistaWeb User Management System.
 - j) Service/Section = Medical Advisory Opinion
 - k) Phone number = Ascertain this from the GAL. There will be times when reviewers do not have a phone number listed.
 - l) Email = Ascertain this from the GAL. If there is a preferred email address for the reviewer, use that one (not yahoo, or Gmail, etc)
 - m) Comments field = Site Name that access was granted and OMLA routing number
- D. Send an email using the email template, address to the Reviewer and cc: Chief of Staff, Requesting attorney, Medical Legal Affairs, HIA MAO inbox, and others that were included in email. The subject line of the email should be in the format: Medical Advisory Opinion Assignment ~ (13-xxxx) ~ Vistaweb Access ~ Name of Reviewer (i.e. Medical Advisory Opinion Assignment (12-849) ~ VistaWeb Access ~ Strickland, Sabrina).
- a) **All emails must be encrypted.** If there is someone without PKI, go through the body of the email and "X" out all PII and PHI in the original email. This includes the name of the Veteran as well as the full SSN. If the attorney has included questions on the email, remove all aspects of PII.
 - b) Upload copy of sent email to Document section of user's account in HIA Registry
 - c) See email template below:

Dr. (Reviewer) has been granted special user access to search for patients in **X (Location)**.

Instructions:

- 1) Use this URL: <https://vistaweb.med.va.gov>
- 2) Select your **LOCAL** site from the list of sites in the left pane.
- 3) Use your **LOCAL** access/verify codes (CPRS codes) to authenticate to your local site.
- 4) If you authenticated correctly, you will now see the Patient Selection screen at your local site.
- 5) You can now navigate to the remote site using the left pane of sites. You will only see sites to which you have been given special access.
- 6) Navigate to your desired remote site and search for the patient.
- 7) If the patient exists at that remote site, VistaWeb will retrieve ALL data from all sites where the patient has been seen.

Additional Information:

- 1) You cannot use CPRS to search for remote patients. You must use the URL, stand-alone, version of VistAWeb. <https://vistaweb.med.va.gov>
- 2) If you have access for a Medical Advisory Opinion (MAO) then your access will expire 60 days from the date of this email.

If you experience any technical issues related to your VistAWeb access please go to this site for assistance. <http://vista.med.va.gov/vistaweb/index.htm>

If you have any questions related to your level of authorization, please contact the Health Information Access (HIA) team at hiamao@va.gov.

- E. Removal/Deactivation of Vistaweb access: Access to Vistaweb for MAO review is only granted for 60 days. After 60 days access is automatically removed without notice
 - a) Go the VistAWeb User Management application.
 - b) Locate the reviewer and deactivate assigned site.
 - c) In Alexsys, search and close MAO ticket.
 - d) In HIA Registry, change Request Status to **Terminated**.