



DEFENSE HEALTH AGENCY
7700 ARLINGTON BOULEVARD, SUITE 5101
FALLS CHURCH, VIRGINIA 22042-5101

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Defense Health Agency Data Strategy for Fiscal Years 2026-2030

- References:
- (a) Department of Defense Directive 5136.13 “Defense Health Agency,” September 30, 2013, as amended
 - (b) Secretary of War Memorandum, “Artificial Intelligence Strategy for the Department of War,” January 9, 2026
 - (c) Department of Defense, “Data, Analytics, and Artificial Intelligence Adoption Strategy,” November 2, 2023
 - (d) Department of Defense, “DoD Data Strategy,” September 30, 2020
 - (e) Military Health System Digital Transformation Strategy, March 26, 2025
 - (f) Assistant Secretary of War for Health Affairs Memorandum, “Planning Guidance for Artificial Intelligence in Health Care,” November 22, 2024
 - (g) Department of War Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Office Memorandum, “Review of Policies and Procedures to Enable Effective and Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence,” January 14, 2025
 - (h) Department of Defense Manual 5200.01, Volume 2, “DoD Information Security Program: Marking of Information,” February 24, 2012, as amended
 - (i) Department of Defense Instruction 5015.02, “DoD Records Management Program,” February 24, 2015, as amended

In accordance with the references, the Department of War (DoW) published a Data Strategy in 2023 that established the Department’s vision, guiding principles, essential capabilities, and goals for transforming the DoW into a data-centric enterprise. In alignment with DoW’s emphasis on treating data as a strategic asset, DoW Components must continue to enhance data governance, improve data quality and interoperability, and enable secure discovery and sharing of data to accelerate decision-making. In March 2025, the Military Health System (MHS) published the MHS Digital Transformation Strategy, which explicitly elevated the importance of integrating data and analytics to improve readiness, outcomes, and enterprise performance.

The Defense Health Agency (DHA) publishes its DHA Data Strategy, attached, to operationalize these Department-wide, MHS priorities for the health enterprise. The DHA Data Strategy will transform data into a trusted, mission-enabling strategic asset that strengthens combat support, enhances health care delivery, and improves operational efficiency across the DHA through aligned governance, modern practices, and a digitally competent workforce.

Implementation of this strategy is approved as of the date of this memorandum. My point of contact is Dr. Jesus Caban, who can be reached at jesus.j.caban.civ@health.mil or (703) 681-7527.



David J. Smith, M.D.
Acting Deputy Director

Attachments:
As stated

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Data Strategy

Fiscal Years 2026-2030

Executive Summary

The DHA Data Strategy provides an actionable framework for achieving data advantage across the Military Health System (MHS) by aligning with the Department of War (DoW) Data Strategy and its principles of making data visible, accessible, understandable, linked, trustworthy, interoperable, and secure while also supporting the MHS Digital Transformation Strategy. Together, these DoW strategies establish the foundation necessary to enhance data maturity throughout the organization.

This FY26-30 data strategy directly supports the DHA Director's Framework and its four Lines of Effort (LOEs):

1. Deliver Warfighter Medical Readiness
2. Deliver Medical Warrior Currency
3. Deliver Joint Warfighting Capabilities
4. Deliver the Healthcare Enterprise Beneficiaries Deserve

Vision

Transform data into a trusted, mission-enabling strategic asset that strengthens combat support, enhances healthcare delivery, and improves operational efficiency across DHA through aligned governance, modern practices, and a digitally competent workforce.

Guiding Principles

The foundational principles of the DHA Data Strategy form the core framework for how the Agency manages and governs data. By adhering to these principles, the Agency ensures that data is consistently transformed into a trusted, mission-enabling asset that strengthens combat support, enhances care delivery, and improves operational efficiency.

1. **Mission Readiness First:** Data initiatives must directly enable combat support, healthcare delivery, and operational efficiency, ensuring a clear and measurable return on investment.
2. **Federated Governance:** Implement centralized standards and policies while allowing decentralized execution of data assets by empowering domain teams.
3. **Collective Data Stewardship:** Every team member is accountable for the value, quality, protection, and responsible use of enterprise data.
4. **Data as a Product (DaaP):** Treat data products like shared enterprise software assets, subject to rigorous management, versioning, governance, and performance/value measurement with clear product ownership and accountability.
5. **Trust Through Designated Sources:** Data trust is crucial and must be anchored in the use of Authoritative Data Sources (ADS), verifiable lineage, auditability, and clear transparency.
6. **Metadata is the Foundation:** Metadata must be actively governed, validated, and published alongside data movement or consumption to ensure its discoverability and contextual relevance.

7. **Security and Privacy by Design:** All data products must integrate security controls, access management, data marking and classification requirements, and Protected Health Information / Personally Identifiable Information protection from the initial design phase.

Data Strategy LOEs

The DHA Data Strategy has five key LOEs.

LOE 1: Strengthen Data Roles and Responsibilities

Objective: Promote organization-wide accountability and awareness that every staff member plays a critical role in data maturity, data governance, and responsible use. This includes ensuring all personnel understand their specific role in managing, protecting, and ethically leveraging data as a strategic asset, thereby contributing to the creation of trustworthy, mission-ready data products.

Actions:

1. **Operationalize a Federated Governance Model:** Define, document, and publish clear roles (e.g. Data Owner, Data Domain Owners, Data Stewards, Information Technology (IT) Custodians, etc.) and establish responsibilities, escalation paths, and operational procedures to ensure consistent governance across all data domains.
2. **Identify and Assign Key Roles:** Identify, designate, and track Data Domain Owners and Data Domain Stewards for the organization's critical Data Domains as the foundational phase of governance implementation.
3. **Launch a Targeted Stewardship Campaign:** Deploy a multi-channel Data Stewardship Awareness Program to reinforce that data stewardship is an enterprise-wide responsibility and to strengthen cultural adoption.
4. **Expand Data Governance Role-Based Training:** Enhance data literacy and governance training by tailoring curricula to each data governance role, covering ethics, quality standards, and security requirements to strengthen workforce skills and readiness for responsible use of MHS data.

LOE 2: Maximize Use of ADS

Objective: Require that all data products originate, whenever feasible, from officially designated and verified internal and external ADS, the single source of truth for their respective data domains.

Actions:

1. **Establish ADS Vetting and Designation Criteria:** Define clear criteria based on who owns the data, quality standards, detailed metadata, and how well the data supports the mission.
2. **Implement an Enterprise ADS Registry:** Integrate the ADS registry with the DHA Enterprise Data Catalog (EDC) to serve as the single source of truth for all designated authoritative data sources.

3. **Prioritize High-Impact ADS:** Focus initial designation efforts on data assets and domains that directly support DHA's combat support and healthcare delivery missions.
4. **Execute a Data Consolidation Strategy:** Execute a phased data consolidation strategy, working with IT Custodians to retire redundant systems as official ADS are designated. Guided by a comprehensive change management and communication plan, initial efforts will prioritize high-redundancy, low-impact systems to build momentum, reduce fragmentation, and establish a repeatable process for more complex consolidations.

LOE 3: Operationalize DaaP

Objective: Transition from project-based data delivery to a reusable, outcome-driven DaaP model that delivers high-value, mission-focused data products supporting readiness, care delivery, and enterprise operations.

Actions:

1. **Standardize the DaaP Lifecycle:** Define and implement the end-to-end DaaP Lifecycle (Discover through Retire), specifying governance and technical requirements for each phase.
2. **Establish a Data Product Specification:** Establish a Data Product Framework to standardize products by codifying specifications for lineage, security, metadata, quality, and interoperability, including clear Service Level Agreements for availability, refresh frequency, and quality thresholds.
3. **Prioritize the Initial Product Portfolio:** Identify, scope, and prioritize the first cohort of foundational Data Products essential for strategic mission as a combat support agency.
4. **Govern Product Value and Health:** Establish a mechanism to measure adoption, health, and value using key metrics to actively govern data products.
5. **Enhance Data Request Processes:** Implement a single, streamlined data request process ensuring alignment with data governance policies and efficient delivery of high-value data products.

LOE 4: Build Trust Through Data Quality and Transparency

Objective: Implement measurable, transparent, automated data quality management and lineage tracking across all data domains.

Actions:

1. **Deploy an Enterprise Data Quality Scorecard:** Implement a standardized Data Quality Scorecard to objectively assess core dimensions of quality, including accuracy, completeness, timeliness, and consistency across enterprise data products.
2. **Automate End-to-End Data Lineage:** Automate full data lineage tracking, linking Data Products to their ADS designation and core metadata to provide complete transparency of data origin.

3. **Publish Quality and Lineage Transparency:** Build trust by publishing data quality scorecards and lineage in the DHA EDC, making these trust signals discoverable for all consumers.
4. **Institutionalize Data Quality Remediation:** Define a formal, prioritized process with clear ownership for investigating, correcting, cleansing, and validating critical data quality defects identified by the data quality scorecard.

LOE 5: Maintain an EDC

Objective: Maintain the EDC as the authoritative metadata repository for all data assets, governance artifacts, and data product metadata, providing a single, trusted library where stakeholders can easily discover, understand, and access mission-ready data.

Actions:

1. **Keep the EDC Updated:** Maintain an up-to-date EDC by integrating it with key data systems so metadata is continuously refreshed as data products and sources evolve.
2. **Apply Metadata-First Governance:** Establish the EDC as the primary source for metadata by requiring that all data products include a data dictionary defining their fields, business rules, transformation logic, and usage guidance.
3. **Improve Transparency Through Metadata Quality:** Display clear metadata quality indicators to help users quickly understand the reliability of each asset.
4. **Support Mission Use Through Contextual Metadata:** Connect EDC metadata to operational and analytical systems so teams can easily access lineage, definitions, and context where data is used.
5. **Support Workforce Learning:** Utilize the EDC and other approved enterprise resources as learning and reference tools that provide accessible definitions, lineage views, and examples to help staff understand and correctly use enterprise data.

Conclusion

The DHA Data Strategy FY26-30 establishes a clear, mission-aligned framework for managing and using data to support combat operations, readiness, care delivery, and enterprise operations. By aligning with the MHS Digital Transformation Strategy and the DoW Data Strategy, it provides a unified approach for governing and leveraging data across the Agency.

Through its five LOEs, the strategy strengthens data roles, promotes the use of trusted data sources, advances DaaP practices, improves data quality, and maintains an EDC. These efforts create a consistent, scalable foundation that supports analytics, innovation, and decision-support capabilities.

By promoting shared stewardship, embedding governance into daily operations, and equipping the workforce with modern data tools and practices, the DHA is positioned to advance a more agile, data-driven, and digitally enabled MHS.

References

1. Department of Defense Directive 5136.13 “Defense Health Agency,” September 30, 2013, as amended
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