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DoD Management Officials Talk EHRs, Security Clearances and In-Sourcing

By Jack Moore   Jun 8, 2011

Working to integrate veterans' digital health records, cutting back on the time it takes to process security clearances and deliberating the age-old in-sourcing question are just a few of the issues the Defense Department's chief managers are facing.

To make a dent in that daunting work load, Deputy Chief Management Officer Beth McGrath and Assistant Deputy Chief Dave Wennergren said the answer lies in leveraging technology and using horizontal, end-to-end processes.

The pair spoke at Government Executive's Leadership Briefings series this week.

Wennergren touted the department's end-to-end strategies, such as procurement-to-pay and hire-to-retire because it allows DoD to "align results and measure progress."

The overarching philosophy in terms of IT acquisition is slanted toward being service-oriented rather than system-oriented, he said, a way of thinking that carries over into the endeavor between DoD and the Department of Veterans Affairs to jointly digitize veterans health records.

The department has also cut back on the time it takes to process security clearances, a criticism that had long dogged DoD. McGrath's team mapped out the stages of the clearance process and leveraged the use of IT to make it easier to collect and share information.

As for the hot-button issue of in-sourcing, McGrath said she has seen "the pendulum go right and left and back," but "at the end of the day, "it's who's doing the work," she said. And because of the budget picture, McGrath said "everything is on the table."