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#	QUESTION	RESPONSE
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Frequently Asked Questions

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1.	What is Project HERO?	<p>Project HERO is a pilot program that helps Veterans get the care they need when it is not readily available at their local Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Centers. While Veterans can still find and visit non-VA doctors with a Non-VA Care (Fee) care authorization, Project HERO provides Veterans with pre-screened networks of health and dental service providers who meet VA standards for quality care. These providers are available through contracts with Humana Veterans Healthcare Services (HVHS) and Delta Dental Federal Government Programs (Delta Dental).</p> <p>The ultimate goal of Project HERO is to help ensure that all care delivered by VA, either through Veterans Health Administration (VHA) or community providers, is of comparable quality and consistency for all Veterans.</p>
2.	What services are provided?	<p>The scope of services purchased under Project HERO includes: medical/surgical specialty care, mental health, diagnostics, dialysis and dental. Each Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) team identifies specialty care needs by geographic location based on historic data and ongoing care needs. VISN teams worked to ensure that Project HERO does not conflict with existing contracts. A full list of available services can be seen here.</p> <p>Through Project HERO, HVHS and Delta Dental provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credentialed, quality providers, accredited facilities • The return of clinical information to VA so primary care providers can make the most informed decisions for their patients • Monitoring and reporting of access to care, appointment timeliness, and patient safety and satisfaction • Appointment-setting services with local medical and dental providers • Patient advocate services • Timely payment of provider invoices

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3.	Where is Project HERO available?	<p>Project HERO is currently available in four VISNs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VISN 8: VA Sunshine Health Care Network Southern Georgia and most of Florida. Does not include Puerto Rico or the U.S. Virgin Islands • VISN 16: South Central VA Health Care Network Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma and portions of Alabama, Florida, Missouri and Texas • VISN 20: Northwest Network Oregon, Washington State, most of Idaho, and one county each in California and Montana. Does not include Alaska. • VISN 23: VA Midwest Health Care Network Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and portions of Western Illinois, Northern Kansas, Missouri, Western Wisconsin, and Eastern Wyoming <p>These four VISNs have the highest expenditures for out-of-VA-network (Non-VA Care (Fee)) care, particularly relative to the number of patient enrollees in the VISN. These VISNs represent approximately 25% of total VA health care enrollment and 30% of annual out-of-network Non-VA Care (Fee) care expenditures. These selection factors help ensure pilot results are representative of the larger VA population.</p>
4.	How do Veterans participate in Project HERO?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To participate in Project HERO, eligible Veterans enroll in the VA health care system and see their primary care physicians. • When specific medical expertise or technologies are not readily available at the local VAMCs, treating providers recommend the required care. Once approved, VAMC Non-VA Care offices authorize patients to receive care in the community (Non-VA Care (Fee)) with Project HERO as one option. <i>Note: HVHS and Delta Dental do not refer patients to VA or to other network professionals. Only VA Non-VA Care offices can refer patients to HVHS and Delta Dental.</i> • HVHS or Delta Dental communicates with Veterans directly to schedule appointments. • Veterans see the HVHS or Delta Dental doctor or dentist. • Doctors and dentists in HVHS and Delta Dental networks must refer all requests for additional services back to VA, allowing VA to manage each patient's care and maintain oversight of each patient's care needs. • After the appointment, HVHS and Delta Dental providers send patient records and invoices to HVHS and Delta Dental. • A random sample of Veterans are surveyed regarding their experience.

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5.	I have been authorized to receive care through Project HERO. What happens next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are receiving medical care through Project HERO, you will receive a phone call from HVHS to set an appointment time. If you are receiving dental care through Project HERO, you will receive a letter from Delta Dental informing you how to set an appointment time. • In either case, you will receive a letter to confirm your appointment time and location. Your VAMC will coordinate the exchange of medical records with HVHS and Delta Dental providers on your behalf. • If you need assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Project HERO at vhacoprojecthero@va.gov or (303) 370-7755.
6.	I'm not eligible for care through Project HERO. How do I get help?	If you are not eligible for care through Project HERO but need assistance, please contact a patient advocate at the closest VAMC for assistance.
7.	How does VA ensure quality of care through Project HERO?	Project HERO contracts require that HVHS and Delta Dental have quality management programs that comply with VA, Joint Commission, and federal and state legal requirements. VA requires HVHS and Delta Dental providers be credentialed per VHA criteria (VHA Handbook 1100.19), and HVHS providers practice at Joint Commission-accredited facilities. The PMO monitors monthly reports from HVHS and Delta Dental that detail quality and safety events as well as feedback from Project HERO patient satisfaction surveys. The PMO conducts quarterly credentialing audits and annual accreditation audits. VA also participates in HVHS and Delta Dental peer review committees that discuss, investigate, monitor and address issues by level of severity and risk.
8.	How is care evaluated by Project HERO?	The Project HERO PMO regularly tracks and monitors quality, safety, vendor performance and other data. This information is gathered, analyzed and reported on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis. The Project HERO PMO shares its findings in reports with stakeholders including the Project HERO Governing Board, directors of participating Project HERO VISNs, senior VA and VHA leadership, VSOs, Academic Affiliates and labor unions.
9.	Why was Project HERO created?	In November 2005, VA developed Project HERO in response to House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations Conference Report 109-305, which directed VA to focus on cost-effective purchasing of care and develop a competitive award with at least three objectives-oriented demonstrations (pilot programs) to encourage collaboration with industry and academia.

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10.	Does Project HERO restrict Veteran choice? Can Veterans choose their own physician through Project HERO?	<p>No, Project HERO does not restrict Veteran choice. Veterans continue to have a range of choices among providers who meet VA standards of care. VA establishes relationships with community-based providers to complement the VHA system of care when specific medical expertise or technology is not readily available through the local VAMC.</p> <p>If a Veteran is eligible for care through Project HERO, he or she will receive a referral to a pre-qualified, credentialed provider. If the Veteran is unsatisfied with a referral, he or she may request another physician or dentist. HVHS or Delta Dental will work to accommodate the request by checking to see if the provider is in their network, and if not, they will attempt to add the provider to the network as quickly as possible.</p>
11.	What are the objectives of Project HERO?	<p>The objectives of Project HERO are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide as much care within VA as possible • When necessary, efficiently refer Veterans to high-quality community-based care • Improve the exchange of medical information between VA and non-VA providers • Foster high-quality care and patient safety • Control operating costs • Increase Veteran satisfaction • Secure accountable evaluation of Demonstration (pilot) results • Sustain partnerships with Academic Affiliates
12.	What are the expected benefits of Project HERO?	<p>Project HERO contracts enable VA oversight of Non-VA Care (Fee) for quality, cost-effective care. All contracted provider networks are required by contract to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet VA-specified quality standards • Meet provider credentialing and facility accreditation standards • Submit clinical information to VA so primary care physicians can make the most informed decisions for their patients • Provide a centralized VHA/vendor-coordinated referral and appointment process • Provide timely payments to providers
13.	When will the Project HERO contracts end ?	<p>Project HERO's dental contract ends on September 30, 2012. Project HERO's medical contract ends on March 31, 2013.</p>
14.	Who were the Project HERO contracts awarded to, and when did delivery begin?	<p>Project HERO contracts were awarded to HVHS and Delta Dental on October 1, 2007 and the contracts are currently in the second option year. As of January 2008, HVHS provides medical/surgical, mental health, diagnostics and dialysis services in VISNs 8, 16, 20 and 23. Delta Dental provides dental services in VISNs 8, 16, 20 and 23.</p>

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15.	On what basis were the contracts awarded and who decided?	VA made the Project HERO award to the offerors whose proposals represented the best overall value to VA. All proposals were evaluated by a Source Selection Evaluation Team (SSET) comprised of subject matter experts representing multiple VA disciplines. Based on the evaluation criteria contained within the Request for Proposal, the SSET made an award recommendation to the Source Selection Authority (SSA). The SSA confirmed the best value award decision and the Contracting Officer awarded the contracts.
16.	How are the contracts administered?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Project HERO Contracting Officer manages and administers the Project HERO contracts. • The Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) monitors contract operations and contractor performance. • The Project HERO Governing Board evaluates and votes on proposed changes in terms and conditions of the contracts.
17.	Does the pilot transfer greater amounts of care outside VA?	Project HERO helps ensure Veterans get quality care, while minimizing impact to the overall volume of care provided through the VAMCs. Project HERO contracts allow VA to require that Non-VA Care providers offer quality, cost-effective care. Contractor performance is not measured according to the volume of care provided.
18.	How is Project HERO funded?	Project HERO funds come from the current VA medical service budgets. Purchased health care needs are identified by geographic area (VISN and VAMC) and by type of specialty care needed. VA purchases services when VA cannot readily provide the service.
19.	What savings are achieved through Project HERO?	<p>Project HERO negotiates rates with HVHS as a percentage of published Medicare reimbursement rates. The majority of Project HERO contracted medical prices with HVHS are at or below Medicare rates. In addition, the majority of the Project HERO contracted rates with Delta Dental for dental services are less than 80% of National Dentistry Advisory Service Comprehensive Fee Report. Project HERO had a net savings of \$16M in FY10 with 20% usage in Project HERO Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs), including value-added fees.</p> <p>The PMO can provide VAMCs with detailed cost comparison information, which may support and facilitate the authorization decision-making process. Please contact the PMO at vhacoprojecthero@va.gov or call (303) 370-7755 for access to this information.</p>
20.	How does Project HERO work with the VHA National Non-VA Care Program Office and Non-VA Care program?	Project HERO is one option within Non-VA Care (Fee) . While Veterans can still find and visit non-VA doctors with a Non-VA Care (Fee) authorization, Project HERO provides Veterans with pre-screened networks of health and dental service providers who meet VA standards for quality care.
21.	My VA facility is not participating in the pilot. Will Project HERO become available in my area?	There are no plans to expand Project HERO to any other locations or facilities.

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22.	How is Project HERO different from Non-VA Care?	Project HERO is one option within Non-VA Care (Fee). While Veterans can still find and visit non-VA doctors with a Non-VA Care (Fee) authorization, Project HERO provides Veterans with pre-screened networks of health and dental service providers who meet VA standards for quality care.
23.	Why not just issue Non-VA Care cards and let patients choose their own providers?	When patients cannot get the care they need through VA, VA issues Non-VA Care (Fee) authorizations that enable patients to choose their own providers. VA also issues Non-VA Care (Fee) authorizations through Project HERO that enable patients to see pre-screened providers who are required to meet VA quality standards, and return medical records to VA for informed, continuous patient care.
24.	How do you intend to involve the VSOs in Project HERO?	VSOs were actively engaged throughout the proposal and award process, and the Project HERO PMO meets with VSOs quarterly to share information, collaborate and seek input on program developments.
25.	I am a non-VA medical or dental provider. How do I participate in the pilot?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical and surgical providers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Project HERO has a contract for medical/surgical, mental health, dialysis and diagnostic care with HVHS. Please contact HVHS directly to establish a contract. You can access credentialing applications, frequently asked questions, and contact information at http://www.humana-veterans.com/. • Dental providers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Project HERO has a contract for all dental services with Delta Dental. Please contact Delta Dental directly to establish a contract. You can learn more, access frequently asked questions, and find contact information at http://www.projectherodental.org/.
26.	I am a non-VA medical provider. How do I submit claims to HVHS?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Project HERO claims are authorized through HVHS by VA based on the contract that is in place. All billing related to care authorized through HVHS from VA is routed back through HVHS. In cases where you are uncertain if the patient was referred by HVHS through the Project HERO contract or directly from VA, please contact HVHS to confirm. • Please submit your claims to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Humana Veterans Healthcare Services ○ PO Box 7062 ○ Camden, SC 29021 <p>You may also call (866) 458-6630 to reach an HVHS Customer service representative or (800) 299-8160 to reach Claims Filing.</p>
27.	I am a non-VA dental provider. How do I submit claims to Delta Dental?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enter the dates of service on the Predetermination Notice for the services that you have completed. NOTE: Completed procedures not previously authorized by VA will neither be payable by Delta Dental or the patient, unless there is a signed statement with the patient stating that the patient agrees to pay for these procedures. • Please see Delta Dental's Web site for further information: http://www.projectherodental.org/dds.html.

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28.	How are medical records exchanged between my non-VA medical or dental office and VA?	Once an authorization for care is complete, VA will forward any applicable medical documentation to you, typically through your staff headquarters via secure e-mail, fax or mail. Once a patient has been seen by your office, most HVHS and Delta Dental providers submit final medical documentation back to their headquarters for submission to VA, again via secure e-mail, fax or mail. For detailed standard operating procedures, please contact HVHS or Delta Dental .
29.	Where can I get more information?	E-mail vhacoprojecthero@va.gov , call (303) 370-7755, or visit www.va.gov/hac/hero . Contact HVHS via its Web site: www.humana-veterans.com or its toll-free referral number: (866) 458-6630. Contact Delta Dental via its Web site: http://www.projecttherodental.org/ or its phone number: (866) 737-6543.