

PROJECT HERO

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 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).

Through Project HERO, HVHS and Delta Dental provide:

- Credentialed providers, accredited facilities
- The return of medical documentation to VA so primary care providers can make the most informed decisions about their patients' care
- Monitoring and reporting of access to care, appointment timeliness, patient safety and satisfaction
- Appointment-setting services with local medical and dental service providers
- Patient advocate services
- Timely payment of provider invoices

OBJECTIVES

The ultimate goal of Project HERO is to help ensure that all health care delivered by VA, either through VA providers or community partners, is of comparable quality and consistency for Veterans.

Project HERO objectives:

- Provide as much care and choice for Veterans within VA as possible
- Efficiently refer Veterans to high-quality community-based care as needed
- Increase Veteran health care satisfaction
- Improve the exchange of information between VA and community providers
- Foster high-quality health care and patient safety
- Sustain partnerships with Academic Affiliates
- Secure accountable evaluation of results

AVAILABILITY

Project HERO is currently available to Veterans in four regions or Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs):

- **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, Northwest 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

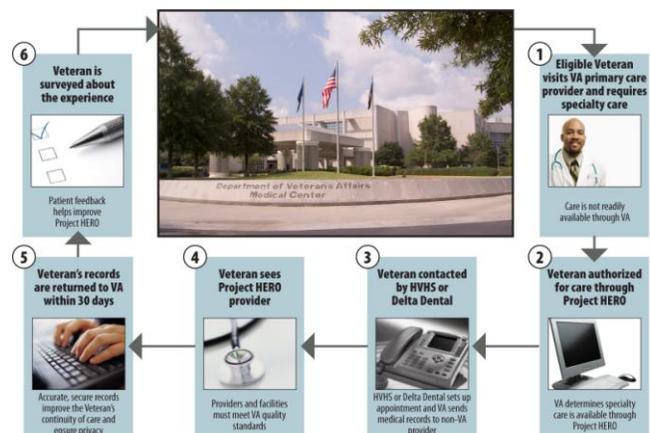
HOW VETERANS PARTICIPATE

First, 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 VAMC and the treating provider recommends the required care, it is clinically approved. Once approved, the VAMC Fee office authorizes the patient to receive care in the community (Fee care) with Project HERO as one option. *Note: HVHS and Delta Dental do not refer patients to VA or other network providers. Only VA Fee care offices can refer patients to HVHS and Delta Dental.*

HVHS or Delta Dental communicates with Veterans directly to schedule appointments. Next, 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 the patient's care and maintain oversight of the 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.



TOP FIVE BENEFITS OF PROJECT HERO

1. **Veterans get the care they need** – When Veterans need care that is not readily available at their local VAMC, they do not have to search for community doctors and dentists. Project HERO supplements VA care with credentialed medical and dental providers to meet their needs.
2. **It is easy** – VA sends a copy of the Project HERO authorization to HVHS and Delta Dental. HVHS and Delta Dental schedule appointments with local medical and dental providers for Veterans.
3. **It is fast** – HVHS and Delta Dental ensure Veterans see specialists within 30 days of receipt of an authorization, and Veterans wait less than 20 minutes to see the doctor or dentist once they have checked in for their appointments.
4. **Records returned to VA** – Veterans have peace of mind knowing their medical and dental records are returned to VA so their primary doctors and dentists can provide more informed, continuous care over time.
5. **Negotiated rates** – Veterans can trust VA is using resources wisely while maintaining high-quality care. HVHS and Delta Dental are contracted to meet VA quality standards at negotiated rates, and they send invoices directly to VA for payment.

PROGRAM OVERSIGHT AND PARTICIPATION

The VA Chief Business Office (CBO) leadership oversees purchased care programs, including Project HERO. CBO leadership regularly monitors and evaluates program metrics, and meets with internal and external stakeholders.

The Project HERO Governing Board, comprised of the Deputy Under Secretary for Health Operations and Management, the VHA Chief Business Officer, and network directors from the four participating VISNs, approves changes in terms, quantities, or conditions of the Project HERO contracts.

The Contract Administration Board (CAB) provides contract guidance as needed, reviewing modifications that impact the contract scope. The CAB is comprised of the Project HERO Contracting Officer, Contracting Officer's Technical Representative, Program Manager, Office of Acquisitions and Logistics members, and the Office of General Counsel.

The Project HERO Program Management Office (PMO) oversees the Project HERO contracts to help ensure quality care, patient safety and satisfaction, timely access to care, and timely return of clinical information (medical documentation) to VA for informed continuity of care. The PMO collaborates with VA, Veterans Service Organizations, Academic Affiliates, industry, other federal agencies and other stakeholders to bring fresh ideas, innovative strategies, tools and capabilities to help VA meet Project HERO's objectives. The PMO provides contract administration, project management, quality oversight, data analysis and reporting, communication and training support.

CLINICAL QUALITY OVERSIGHT

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.

PROJECT HERO HISTORY

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 to develop a competitive award with at least three objective-oriented demonstrations (pilot programs) to encourage collaboration with industry and academia.

In January 2008, VA awarded a contract to HVHS for medical/surgical, mental health, diagnostics, and dialysis. VA awarded a contract to Delta Dental for dental care.

MORE INFORMATION

- VA Project HERO: www.va.gov/hac/hero, vhacoprojecthero@va.gov, (303) 370-7755
 - Humana Veterans Healthcare Services: www.humana-veterans.com, (866) 458-6630
 - Delta Dental Federal Programs: www.projectherodental.org, (866) 737-6543
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