



General Information Fact Sheet

Updated May 2008

BACKGROUND

In November 2005, the Department of Veterans Affairs (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 objectives-oriented demonstrations to encourage collaboration with industry and academia.

PROJECT HERO MODEL

In its current model, VA authorizes Fee care for veterans when specific medical expertise or technology is not available in the Department. In many cases, veterans then find their own community-based providers.

In the Project HERO model, VA better manages Fee care through establishing effective, high-quality relationships with community providers to complement the VA system of care. Veterans now have access to a network of pre-qualified, credentialed providers that meet VA standards for quality. Specialty care provider services from Humana Veterans Healthcare Services (HVHS) and Delta Dental Federal Services (Delta Dental) are only contracted when VA does not have the internal capacity or capability to provide the service.

Project HERO enhances the opportunity for VA to conduct effective medical management, establish complete patient records, and improve continuity of care between VHA facilities and community facilities. VA monitors the quality of care veterans receive in the community, and VA providers have access to patient records documenting the receipt of such care.

VA continues to collaborate and engage with VA staff, Veterans Services Organizations (VSOs), Academic Affiliates, industry, and other Federal agencies in the course of implementing Project HERO. These partnerships bring fresh ideas and leading-edge strategies, tools, and capabilities to help VA meet Project HERO's goals.

CONTRACT AWARD AND STATUS

Contracted services are available in VISNs 8, 16, 20, and 23:

- As of January 1, 2008 contracted services for medical/surgical, diagnostics, mental health, and dialysis are available through HVHS.
- As of January 14, 2008 contracted services for dental care are available through Delta Dental.

GOVERNANCE AND MONITORING

Project HERO has formed a Governing Board to oversee the Demonstration. The Governing Board ensures that veterans continue to receive high-quality care and communicates Project HERO activities and status to VISN teams. In addition, the Governing Board reviews and approves any change in terms, quantities, or conditions of the Project HERO contracts. It is comprised of Senior Leadership from VA, VHA, and participating VISNs.

Project HERO additionally convenes a Contract Administration Board (CAB) on an as-needed basis to provide further contract guidance. Membership includes the Project HERO Contracting Officer, Contracting Officer Technical Representative (COTR), Program Manager, and members of Office of Acquisitions and Logistics (OA&L) and of the Office of General Counsel (OGC). The CAB reviews major modifications approved by the Governing Board that impact the contract scope. The CAB provides its input to the Contracting Officer prior to exercising contract modifications.



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DEMONSTRATION EVALUATION AND REPORTING

Both contractors are required to submit a Quality Assurance Surveillance Plan (QASP) that details monthly reporting on the following:

- Clinical information sharing
- Access
- Quality
- Accreditation and credentialing
- Patient safety
- Patient satisfaction
- Submission of claims data

To assess the quality of procured services, the Project HERO Program Management Office (PMO) will collect and report on the following:

- Quality of care
- Cost and volume compared to historical cost and volume of purchased care
- Volume by type of care compared to historical volume of the same type of care
- Access and timeliness of care provision
- Patient satisfaction
- Contractor performance
- Adherence of the contractor to VA directives and constraints included in the contracts

Contractual requirements will ensure these standards are consistent with VA standards. The contracts also require that clinical information sharing processes be followed for each episode of care provided in the community. Specific timelines for the return of the clinical information are included in the contract.

The PMO developed and has begun distributing patient satisfaction surveys to directly assess veterans' satisfaction with Project HERO purchased care. Reports are distributed on monthly, quarterly and annually basis to specific stakeholders. The first quarterly report is anticipated for release in the August/September 2008 timeframe.

VALUE-ADDED SERVICES

Project HERO features the following added services from its contracted provider networks:

- Appointment concierge services
- Return of clinical information
- Claims processing to providers for timeliness and creation and sending of claims to the VA for reimbursement
- Patient advocate services
- Quality monitoring and assurance through accreditation, licensing, and reporting
- Monitoring and reporting access and timeliness standards